



# SEVEN MONTHS WITH MAHATMA GANDHI

BEING AN INSIDE VIEW OF THE INDIAN NON-CO-OPERATION  
MOVEMENT OF 1921-22 .

BY  
KRISHNADAS

Abridged and Edited  
by  
RICHARD B. GREGG



NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE  
AHMEDABAD

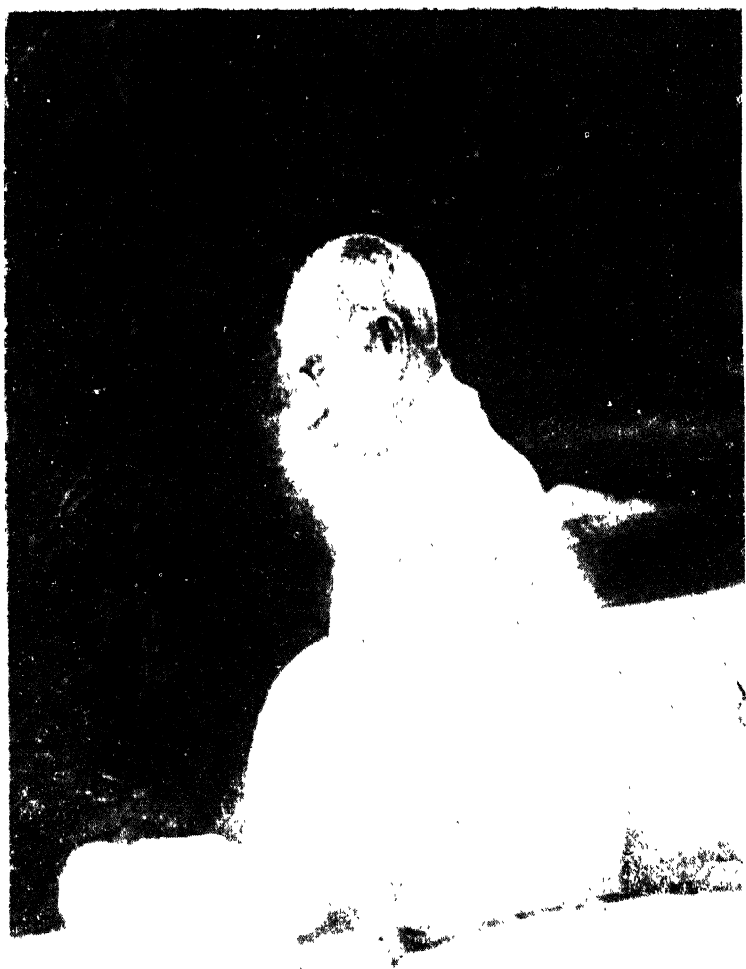












GANDHIJI

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## PREFACE

The following pages are a selection of chapters from Krishnadas' *Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi*, which was published originally in two volumes. My aim was, at the author's request, to condense the original work by retaining only those chapters which seem to give best the picture of Gandhiji's personal character and its effect upon the Indian people. In the original volumes, much space is devoted to detailed political events, but in this edition, only enough of such incidents have been retained to give a setting for the picture and bring out the character of personalities who played their part on the Indian political stage at that time. I trust that the gaps will not interfere with the reader's interest. A few editorial changes of minor phraseology and of chapter titles have also been made. Wherever omissions have been made the fact is stated in a foot-note.

Krishnadas' book interested me greatly and helped me to a better understanding of Gandhiji's character and influence. I hope that others will find its vivid pages equally interesting and valuable.

Boston, Mass., U. S. A.  
October, 1932

RICHARD B. GREGG



## INTRODUCTION

While staying with Mahatma Gandhi I had absolutely no idea of writing a book about him. Towards the end of 1921 when the political firmament of India was overcast with dark clouds, and many of his lieutenants and faithful followers were removed, one by one, from him, some by imprisonment, some by the call of duty elsewhere, it fell to me to assist him in his correspondence and in the editorial work of *Young India*. Then I happened to see all his papers, and had exceptional opportunities of studying at first hand the lines of thought that guided him in conducting the great movement inaugurated by him. It was Mahatmaji's\* practice to destroy almost all important papers after they had served their purpose, and I, too, began to do likewise. Seeing this, a friend one day asked me to preserve all important papers, but I jocosely replied that I was an iconoclast, and not an idolater.

Of course, I said this in quite a humorous spirit, for I believe that so long as a man pays homage to some great ideal or aspiration he cannot help being drawn by secret attraction of soul to one in whose exalted personality he finds reflected that ideal and that aspiration. And this is the genesis of hero-worship. Hero-worship has been, and will ever be in this world, and in worshipping the hero we are really worshipping the ideal.

At that time, however, the pressure of daily events and the daily correspondence overwhelmed me so completely that it was simply impossible for me to decide which papers to preserve and which not. Moreover, I had no idea at the time that it was at all possible for me (adequately) to give an account of what I saw and felt about this mighty movement.

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\* In the Indian languages the ending *ji* added to a personal name denotes honour and respect.



On my return to Bengal a few months after Mahatmaji's incarceration, all my friends were eager to hear of him from me, and some even pressed me to write down my experiences during my stay with him. During the seven months that I had the good fortune of living with him, I had kept a regular correspondence with my revered teacher, Shri Satishchandra Mukerji; and as he was anxious to hear from me regularly and in detail all about me, I used to write to him at length about everything. Fortunately, he had preserved all my letters with great care, and it was at his instance and under his encouragement, and mainly with the help of those letters, that this book has been written.

Those who have intimately associated with Mahatmaji may feel the detailed descriptions in this book somewhat superfluous, and sometimes even repellant. But the revolution in the thoughts and feelings of men and the awakening among the masses that Mahatmaji has been able to bring about by the movement of non-co-operation, though it has been hailed as unique in the history of the world, may soon in the natural course of time, sink into the oblivion of the past. And though posterity may be eager to know and understand the intensity and magnitude of the movement and the awakening by it, no definite picture of the same may be available at that time. The basic principles of non-co-operation have, indeed, been explained and discussed in many a book, and Mahatmaji's own writings will remain for ever the supreme authorities on the subject. But the story of the wonderful upheaval among the masses wrought by Mahatmaji's movement, although it might continue to hold the imaginations of men as a glorious tradition, would remain obscure in the absence of a faithful and detailed record. I admit that no description could adequately portray and revive the memory of this great upheaval. Moreover, the movement is still in progress, and none can tell beforehand what unnumbered events may yet follow. Nevertheless, I have tried with the help of such insight as I had gained by an intimate

contact during these seven months with Mahatmaji, to preserve, as far as I could, the memory of the eager hopes and enthusiasms that swayed the minds and hearts of the Indian masses from the Himalayas to the sea at that moment of the new awakening, and of the dominating influence wielded by the stupendous energy and the incomparable sweetness of his personal character.

I believe that the way in which Mahatmaji has been seeking, through this movement, to purify politics and raise it to the level of religion has already had the effect of initiating a movement of change of an epochal character. There have been in the past movements for Swaraj or independence in all countries, and there will be such movements also in the future ; but the method by which Mahatmaji has been trying to achieve Swaraj is such that if it succeeds it will have changed the course of men's thoughts, and will have, indeed, substituted for brute force, Truth, Justice, and the Power of the General Will. By the application, in the sphere of politics, of the principles of *ahimsa* or non-violence and of Satyagraha or application of truth-force, by the scheme of mass civil disobedience, *i.e.* disobedience to unjust or non-moral laws ; by fulfilling the programme of the *charkha* and *khaddar*, of Hindu-Moslem unity and the removal of untouchability, etc., which are the several items of the constructive programme, Mahatmaji has been serving the cause not of India only, but of the whole world.

My faith is that with the success of this great work of Mahatmaji there will arise throughout the thinking world an eager desire to learn about his modes of thought and his message. But in order that we may thoroughly appreciate a man's thoughts and teachings, it is necessary, in the first instance, to become intimately acquainted with the facts of his life ; for it is undoubtedly true that the acts of a man's life are, as a rule, guided and regulated by his inner feelings. If a man's thoughts and teachings are thoroughly sincere, even the minor incidents of his daily life reveal the deeper meaning and purpose of his teachings and the inner springs of his conduct. For,

indeed, there is an invariable correspondence between his words and his actions, and on many an occasion his actions illustrate his words. That is why I have thought fit to enter into minute details of many an incident of Mahatmaji's daily life. I know not whether I have succeeded in bringing into relief the special features of his character and his unique personality. For in proportion as, and in the manner in which, I have been able to comprehend him, in that proportion and in that manner only, have I been able to paint him. And, as a result, if any errors have crept in, I crave the reader will forgive me, remembering that they have not been wilful, but owe their origin to misjudgment on my part.

KRISHNADAS

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### ERRATA

Page	Line	
7	23	Insert <i>whether</i> before "if they knew".
162	3	Read <i>mean</i> for <i>means</i> .
252	16	Read <i>had been</i> for <i>has been</i> .

**SEVEN MONTHS WITH MAHATMA GANDHI**



## CHAPTER I

### WHEN I FIRST SAW MAHATMAJI

It was in November 1920, that the whole of India was stirred to the depths by the news of the students' strike in the renowned Aligarh College, under the influence of the Non-co-operation movement. The waves of excitement gradually spread from Aligarh to the Banaras Hindu University. First Shri George Joseph, the editor of the *Allahabad Independent*, then Maulana Mohammed Ali, and after him Pandit Motilal Nehru had come to Banaras and addressed the students, to win them over to the principles of non-co-operation ; and finally towards the end of November Mahatma Gandhi himself had arrived. His arrival was the signal for an unprecedented wave of excitement and enthusiasm in the city, and the Hindu University itself began to tremble to its foundations. I was at the time living with my revered teacher, Shri Satishchandra Mukerji, formerly Principal of the Bengal National College, and Editor, *Dawn Magazine*, Calcutta.

Immediately after his arrival, so a friend informed me, Mahatmaji had addressed an audience of students at the University on the morning of the 26th November. In that speech, after describing the Punjab wrongs and the interference by the British Government with the Muslim religion in the matter of the Khilafat, he had counselled the students to non-co-operate, by way of a remedy. At the same time, he had warned them against doing anything under the influence of passion, or any momentary impulse. His advice to them was that they must not take any decisive step without making sure that they were following the dictates of their innermost self, the voice of the spirit within. This led a student to put the question "What is this inner voice? We have never had the good fortune to hear it." To this Mahatmaji made answer that



this voice of the inner spirit could only be heard by those who practised self-sacrifice, i.e. *tapas* and *brahmacharya*, and that they could never go wrong who had learnt to abide by the verdict of this inward monitor.

Then I learnt from another friend that Mahatmaji had invited the students to a discussion at his own residence at 1 p.m. So I went there at that hour, and found him seated in the midst of a large circle of them.

That was my first sight of Mahatmaji. He was speaking so low that his voice was getting drowned by the sounds of footsteps of people moving about. So I moved a bit nearer and took my seat not far behind him, when quite abruptly he exclaimed. "The spirit of the Lord is come to Hindusthan. Has it not?" I noticed that, in order the better to impress on the minds of his hearers any particular matter or any particular idea, he would move his right finger keeping time with his words. Then in reply to a question from a student, he went on explaining on what basis an *ashram* should be established to train our boys along right lines. At this moment, the youngest son of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya came in, and whispered something in the ears of Mahatmaji. Mahatmaji at once stopped the discussion, and coming out, took his seat in a car. He was accompanied by Pandit Motilal Nehru. I learnt that he was going to Malaviyaji for a discussion on non-co-operation with him. My impression up till then had been that Mahatmaji had a listless and tired look, perhaps owing to some weight on his mind; but when he cordially invited Motilalji to get in, and moved a little to make room for him, I saw that a light flashed in his eyes, and his face brightened up.

I saw him for a second time the same afternoon, when he addressed a mass meeting in the Banaras Town Hall compound. But now his face wore an altogether different look. Seeing that the noise and bustle had not ceased, he stood up and moving round and round and beckoning with his hand, called upon the people to observe silence and be seated in their places. I observed his smiling face, his flashing eyes, and his steps, and it seemed to me that he

was eager to distribute all the gladness of his heart. It was such a huge gathering! In fact, I had never seen such a gathering in Banaras before. I was standing behind, watching the doings and the behaviour of the crowd. Then I saw Babu Shivaprasad Gupta rising, and raising his voice to its highest pitch; but I could not distinguish a word from where I stood. I wondered if I could ever hear Mahatmaji's voice from that distance; but when he began to speak, sitting in a chair, I could distinctly hear every word. Yet it did not appear that he was straining his voice or making any serious effort to make himself heard. When in the course of his exposition of the programme of non-violence, in solemn accents he uttered the words, "If you draw the sword, you will perish with the sword," it was so thrilling that the words are still ringing in my ears.

After this meeting, Mahatmaji attended a conference of the professors of the Hindu University in the evening. There, one of the professors asked him how it was that he called upon everybody to follow the dictates of his own conscience, when a study of history showed that wherever war, strife and bloodshed had taken place, it had all taken place in the name of conscience. Mahatmaji's answer was, so I was told, that, while it was true that there had been much wrong done in the name of conscience, it would be proved by weighing the evil done in the name of conscience against the good, that the latter far outweighed the former. Mahatmaji also pointed out the need for emphasis on self-control and self-sacrifice, in the lives of men, as a safeguard against the abuse of conscience; and explained that, by preaching non-violence side by side with the need for following conscience, he was trying his best to avert war and bloodshed.

The state of things among the students was somewhat perplexing. There was still as before the same enthusiasm, the same excitement; but they could not decide on any definite course of action. If only Mahatmaji had definitely called upon them to leave their college, they would readily have done so, but instead he simply asked

them to think out the problem for themselves, and decide as to their duty.

The next day (27th November, 1920), Mahatmaji again addressed a gathering of students in the College Hall, under the presidency of the Vice-Chancellor Pandit Malaviyaji himself. Having received previous intimation, I was able to attend the meeting. Mahatmaji said that he revered Malaviyaji as his own elder brother, he had hoped they would work hand in hand like brothers for the country's good, but most unfortunately, they had not been able to see eye to eye with each other. When he had been to Aligarh to counsel the students to non-co-operate, the sight of the mighty structures of the college, and the recollection of the glorious achievement of Sir Syed Ahmed, had almost overpowered him with grief, and the thought came to him if he was after all doing the right thing. But the inner voice gave him the clear assurance that what he was doing was thoroughly right. Here, too, in spite of his regard for Malaviyaji and his appreciation of the Hindu University, in obedience to the call of the spirit within and the call of duty, he was bound to tell the students that, if, in view of the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs, the truth had at all dawned upon them, that the present Government stood for injustice and unrighteousness, it was their clear duty to have nothing to do with that Government. In such a matter, it would not do to think of the future. If any of them came to know that their teacher lived by robbery, should they then think of their future studies or should they immediately leave off all connection with him? In the same way, if any of them felt in their heart of hearts that the actions of the Government were untruthful and unrighteous, he would unhesitatingly advise them to cease to have anything to do with it, and would assure them that the mere ability to renounce evil company would lay the foundation of their character and would of itself be no small education. If, on the other hand, they continued to co-operate with what was unjust and wicked, knowing it to be such, but not having the strength sternly to set their

faces against it, then with all their encyclopaedic learning, they would remain cripples for ever; and beyond working as slaves of others, they would not be fit for any independent function in life. Hence he told them that, if they accepted his view that the present Government was evil, it was their religious duty to non-co-operate with it. Not in a spirit of haughty defiance, however; for there is no place for haughtiness or defiance in non-violent non-co-operation, which was a movement for self-purification. And if they decided to leave their college, they should reverently wait upon their parents, and, if possible, get their permission, and at the time of leaving, they should see Malaviyaji, and humbly prostrating themselves before him, ask for his blessings.

After this a considerable number of students visited Mahatmaji at night, and said that five hundred of them were prepared to leave in a body, provided that he would start a national college for them. But Mahatmaji asked in reply, of what possible use would it be to him if somebody made a gift to him of one *lakh* of counterfeit rupees? He should be greatly troubled to keep them, but if he got a single genuine rupee, he could hope to do much with it. He went on to ask further if they knew that there was a serpent lodged in their room, they "would pause for a moment to reflect where they should go, or what they should do; would they not rather straightway leave the room?"

Hearing Mahatmaji's reply the students were greatly troubled as to what to do. Mahatmaji made it clear to them that it was no good starting a national college all at once, since they would hanker after the very same methods of study as in the Government colleges which would not lead to any change in their life and character. His aim was to help in developing strength of character, and he wanted, therefore, to test their regard for truth and justice, and their capacity for sacrifice.

Professor Kripalani of the Hindu University had non-co-operated on the occasion of Mahatmaji's visit to Banaras. Mahatmaji instructed the Professor to make a

selection of those students only who wanted to non-co-operate, under no momentary impulse of excitement, but, as their deliberate judgment, and with them to start an *ashram* to train them in the first place in methods of self-support and self-trust. He asked the Professor to see that students of the *ashram* should learn to stand on their feet and not depend on their guardians for financial help, and further that they should be trained in the habit of doing their work with their own hands. Thus in accordance with Mahatmaji's instructions and under the leadership of Professor Kripalani, the Gandhi Ashram of Banaras was established by some earnest and energetic youths of the Hindu University, and they set themselves to the task of educating themselves and building up their own character with a view to be of service to their motherland.

## CHAPTER II

### EXPERIENCES OF A DAY

Some time after these events Mahatmaji himself officiated as high priest in Bombay at a sacrificial offering of a huge pile of foreign cloth which he set fire to with his own hands. The imposing ceremonial was witnessed by more than a hundred thousand people, and the stir it created filled the whole country. About this time one day, my esteemed friend, Professor Kripalani, came to my teacher, Shri Mukerji, and informed him that Mahatma Gandhi would be due at Allahabad on the 9th of the month, and he would be soon leaving for Allahabad to place before Mahatmaji the budget of his *ashram* (Banaras Gandhi Ashram). At that time my health had distinctly gone down. For a long time past, I had been ill, and recently I had got worse. My teacher had, therefore, decided to send me down for a change of climate to Shri Purnendunarayan Sinha's at Patna. Professor Kripalani, however, suggested that instead of going to Patna I might accompany him to Allahabad and try that. Shri Mahadev Desai was then on the staff of the (Allahabad) *Independent* as joint editor, and already our relations with him were intimate. Prof. Kripalani's proposal commended itself to my teacher and he was willing that I should try Allahabad for at least a week, putting up with Shri Desai. If, however, the place did not suit me, he said, I might leave for Patna.

The next morning (10th August), accordingly, in the company of Kripalaniji, I took a B. N. W. R. train to Allahabad, and arrived at Pandit Motilalji's place at about 11 o'clock. I had long been hearing of *Anand Bhavan*, Panditji's famed residence. With his active entry into the Non-co-operation movement, it had sprung at once into prominence as a chief centre of Congress activity. It is a massive pile standing in the midst of a large garden.

Making our way through the garden, we came before the building and there found Shri Desai standing, as if expectantly awaiting our arrival. As soon as he caught sight of Kripalaniji, his whole face lit up with a smile. He then ran up to us, and receiving Kripalaniji with an affectionate slap on the back, escorted us both to a room at the further end of the house. There, on a cot, sat Mahatma Gandhi, intent on the study of some papers which lay before him, and two young men sat in chairs on his right, assisting him in his work. When Kripalaniji went and made obeisance by touching Mahatmaji's feet, he lifted his eyes and receiving him with a broad smile exclaimed, 'So you have come?' I only stood at a distance reverently looking on. I did not feel inclined to go near his presence and offer my salutations, as I felt it would be impudence on my part to do so. I had rarely seen such a smile as that with which Mahatmaji greeted the Professor. His whole countenance expanded like a (China) rose in bloom and displayed an uncommon loveliness. I noticed that whenever in the course of his talks, he burst into a smile, the same indescribable brightness lit up his eyes and face. The Professor had taken with himself a *khaddar dhoti* woven in his own *ashram* to make a present to Mahatmaji. As soon as it was produced before Mahatmaji, he proceeded to test the yarn, and then smiling said in Hindi, "I want sixty crores worth of *khaddar*. Of what use would a single piece of *dhoti*\* be to me? As long as the total required quantity is not forthcoming, how can I put on such a big piece of *dhoti*? I would have to tear it and make short loin-cloths out of it before I could use it." The Professor said: "Given the capital, is there any special difficulty in producing sixty crores worth of *khaddar*?" Mahatmaji answered: "Why, already there is one crore of rupees at your disposal as capital. What further capital is needed, that also would be available." This conversation over, Kripalaniji was about to introduce me to Mahatmaji. But some six or seven people

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\* A long piece of cloth worn round the waist by male Indians.

having then entered the room, I had time to tell the Professor that I was quite happy in having had an opportunity of seeing Mahatmaji from a distance, and that he would be conferring on me a favour if he complied with my request not to take me to Mahatmaji. I felt that I had no business to waste his precious time. Finding that I was so very unwilling, the Professor refrained from taking me to Mahatmaji. Subsequent to this, after bath and meal, once or twice did I enter Mahatmaji's room, and I noticed that he was deeply intent on his work.

Pandit Motilalji, all smiles, was moving about welcoming every guest. After some time spent in talks in Mahatmaji's room, he said he would be attending Maulana Mohammed Ali's *darbar*, and with this he left and repaired to a hall in the central part of the building. It was for the first time then that I heard that Maulana Mohammed Ali was there. I had for long been familiar with his name, and naturally I felt the eagerness to go and have a look at him. So, I followed Panditji into that hall, and there found the Maulana Saheb seated in the midst of a group of persons, mostly Mussalmans. They were putting him all sorts of questions, and he was replying in broken accents. It appeared to me that his voice was naturally so broken. It was as if the sounds proceeded from his very stomach, and one got the impression that each single word of his was being projected as it were from within. His conversation, his general demeanour, in fact everything about him, showed that he was a man endued with high spirit and courage.

After answering for a while the queries put to him by people about him, the Maulana Saheb rose and left. Then I set out in search of Professor Kripalani, and after much wandering about discovered him engaged in conversation with a gentleman whom I did not know. He was showing him the report and other papers connected with his Ashram. From the very way in which they were talking to each other, I could however easily make out that he was no other than Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the



renowned son of Pandit Motilal Nehru. It was for the first time now that I saw Pandit Jawaharlal, the very image of the spirit of sacrifice and straightforwardness. Of his virtues I had heard from many lips. I stood quietly behind, hearing them talk, but without disturbing them. Jawaharlalji was talking in a low voice, but his words were rapid. With a little attention I could discover that while the sounds were so low, he would now and then speak out with a sudden jerk and emphasis on particular words. His countenance, his words and his manner, all showed that there was not any mental reservation behind his speech, that, in fact, his exterior was, so to say, a true concrete representation of his interior nature. I noticed also that the presence of Mahatmaji had brought there a large body of other leading men of Allahabad, whose names so often figured in the papers. Besides, under the shade of the trees outside, sat many who had come from the villages around.

Wandering about and merely observing things, I got tired, so I rested for a while in a chair on the verandah where many others also were seated. Just at this time a motor car drew up at the gate. I then learnt that Mahatmaji was going to a meeting of ladies, from which he was to proceed to a mass meeting on the grounds of the Swaraj Sabha. The moment we heard that Mahatmaji would be coming, we all rose to our feet. Soon he came, rather suddenly, holding Jawaharlalji by the hand. His steps were rapid. With eyes turned towards none, he moved fast and stood at the gate. Already, however, having seen the car arrive, the people from the villages, who had all been resting under the trees had all hurried to the gate and crowded about the car to get a *darshan* (auspicious sight) of Mahatmaji. Finding that it was not possible to force a passage through the crowd and reach the car, Mahatmaji checked his speed, and came to a rather sudden halt. Jawaharlalji now made an appeal to the people to divide and stand in two rows, so as to make a passage for Mahatmaji. They obeyed his instruction, and stepped aside forming two lines, and a path was

made for Mahatmaji to walk and reach the car. Still Mahatmaji did not move. It was as if he was looking for an opportunity how effectively to make a dash through the small crowd. Pandit Jawaharlal on his part was repeatedly entreating that no one should leave his place and attempt to make a move towards Mahatmaji. But his appeal fell on deaf ears. At the sight of Mahatmaji these people, it appeared, had become quite beside themselves. With eyes rivetted on his countenance, they gave themselves up to joyous cries. Their eyes looked as if they had transported themselves into some dreamland. Their regard for Jawaharlalji was deep; that is why they obeyed him and remained standing in two opposite rows. But when he warned them not to leave their places, it seemed as if the warning did not reach their ears at all. Mahatmaji was seeking for an opportunity of making a dash through them. Precisely in the same way the crowd stood, lying in wait, as it were, for an opportunity to touch his person. This was much like what we see among children running and playing, when one among them suddenly stops to seize the opportunity of touching the body of his rival. The shouts of *jai* (victory) to Mahatma Gandhi had for a moment diverted my attention to them, but that very moment Mahatmaji had made his way to the car and had got himself seated. At this, the people seemed to have lost all self-possession. Crowding round the car on every side they began to press and jostle about, and it seemed as if they would smash the car. In this confusion, with no other alternative, the car was driven forward. The scene is indescribable; there was the continual shouting and crying of "victory to Mahatma Gandhi", while on top of it was this mad struggle to get near. It would be no wonder, I thought, if someone in the crowd got smothered under the pressure. Even after the car had begun moving no small number of people clung desperately to the two sides and kept on hanging. But the speed increasing, they all quickly got down one by one. The whole of the crowd then began running after the car, shouting 'victory' all

the while. Such a sight was altogether a novel experience in my life. As an ocular demonstration of the people's deep love for Mahatmaji, this little incident indeed was most striking. But it also showed to me for the first time to what tyrannical excesses love may go. Mahatmaji having departed, the house relapsed into dull stillness. So many people had been coming and going, but now one by one all had left, no one knew wither.

Professor Kripalani now came and told me that it was absolutely necessary for us to be at the public meeting before Mahatmaji arrived ; for otherwise it would not be possible to get admittance. I had no previous experience of the sort of commotion amidst which I had been moving that day ; my life had till then been lived in seclusion. I was therefore quite ready to follow the lead of the Professor wherever he should direct my steps. His plan was that we should reach the office of the *Independent* \* first, and then go to the public meeting in the company of Shri Mahadev Desai. Then a certain heavy, plumpy, jovial gentleman offered to get us to the *Independent* office. His son would be presently coming in a car, and he would ask him to take us there. This gentleman was Shri Shyamlal Nehru, as I learnt afterwards from Kripalaniji. He was then conducting the *Democrat* newspaper. He was full of fun and humour, with an ever beaming countenance. I had seen him during midday, entertaining Mahatmaji in his room for a fairly long time with all sorts of stories. In answer to the query whether Kripalaniji would be able to identify his son, the Professor, pointing to Shri Nehru's huge, bulky frame, said that just as it was impossible to mistake the father, so also it would be impossible to mistake the son. He would be able to identify the son from his likeness to the father. On this Shri Nehru burst into a roar of laughter and left.

Arriving at the *Independent* office shortly after, we found Shri George Joseph, the editor, and Shri Mahadev

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\* A daily newspaper then issued from Allahabad devoted to the cause of Non-co-operation.

Desai, both very busy with their work. Shri Joseph having written an article criticizing Shri Chintamani,\* Shri Desai was engaged in looking over the proofs. The latter while at work made a casual remark that Shri Joseph was bound to get imprisoned directly that article came out. From the talk they were having with each other, I received the impression that it was their belief that Shri Chintamani was a man who could hardly brook public criticism of himself. The reading of the proofs over, Shri Desai read out to us two articles from Maulana Mohammed Ali's pen, written at Shri Desai's instance, under the title of "Undelivered Letters", one of which was addressed to Shri Sherwani and the other to Shri Ranga Iyer. Having heard the letters, so humourously written, we could not stop laughing for a while. Thus the hour for the meeting having drawn near, from the *Independent* office we made straight for the Swaraj Sabha *maidan* (grounds) where the meeting was to be held.

It seemed as if the *maidan* was no longer a *maidan*, but a veritable sea of heads. All were waiting in expectation of Mahatmaji. The way to the platform, for the leaders, was from behind, where volunteers kept strict guard. Shri Desai took me with him by that way to the vicinity of the platform and took his seat on one of the steps leading up to it and asked me to do likewise. I noticed that at one corner of the meeting place there was a huge collection of foreign clothing got ready for Mahatmaji to set fire to. Pandit Motilalji's contribution to that pile deserves special mention. His foreign neckties suspended by a rope in the shape of a garland in his own house had already attracted my attention. In addition, he had sent for the bonfire some other foreign clothes including fine garments of foreign make. Even from that distance I could descry among the articles piled up some highly expensive apparel. The crowd was so vast, and yet there

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\* Then filling the office of a "Minister" in the Provincial Government (U. P.).

was little disorder. All were waiting patiently. A short while after, Mahatmaji arrived followed by Maulana Mohammed Ali, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, and others. Mahatmaji's eyes were not turned away anywhere; he rapidly mounted up the steps and took his seat on the dais. Pandit Motilal commenced the proceedings by offering a warm welcome to Mahatmaji, Maulana Mohammed Ali and the other assembled leaders; and the speeches followed. Mahatmaji first addressed the audience, and was followed by Maulana Mohammed Ali. As soon as he got up, a man from a distant corner rose and shouted at the top of his voice that the Turkey cap on the Maulana's head was of foreign manufacture, and with this he began abusing him. This insult to the Maulana agitated the local leaders not a little, but the former with a wave of the hand calmed the audience and taking the cap in his own hand exclaimed to the audience that though in shape it resembled a Turkey cap, yet as a matter of fact it was made of *khaddar*. The gentleman referred to was thus silenced, and he quietly resumed his seat. But the incident gave to Maulana Saheb's speech almost the character of a reply to many false accusations levelled against him by his political opponents, and especially by the *Leader* newspaper of Allahabad. Maulana Saheb was followed by Shri Stokes. What was my surprise when I heard him give his speech in such good Hindi, and with so much ease! After Shri Stokes, Mahatmaji made a second short speech setting his arguments in support of the destruction of foreign cloth, and calling upon the people to keep to their seats and not crowd about the pile of foreign cloth when he would go to light it. But the moment he rose from his seat, the whole audience stood up also. He then hurriedly left to set fire to the clothes, and having done so quitted the place.

When the meeting was over, all order among the crowd was at an end. Neither of us knew our way, and it was already dark. How to get back home was therefore a problem. As we were wandering about, puzzled which

way to take, we met a friend of Shri Mahadev Desai, who arranged for our return home.

Returning to the *Anand Bhavan*, we saw two carriages laden with the luggage belonging to Mahatmaji and his party ready to leave for the station. Seeing that Mahatmaji was preparing to start, Kripalaniji told me that he also must accompany him to Patna, for so far nothing had been done about the business which had brought him there. The news that Kripalaniji was about to take leave of me made me sad. I told Kripalaniji that after he had left, I also must return to Banaras. He was a little concerned to hear this. For it was his belief that a few days spent outside Banaras by way of a change would set me up. He therefore proposed to me that it would be better to carry out my original programme of going to Patna instead of returning to Banaras. But the day's confusion and excitement had so much told upon my nerves that my inclination at the time was to go back to Banaras. And I remembered also what my teacher had told me when I left Banaras. He had warned me against following Mahatmaji in his tour, seeing that my body would hardly be able to bear the strain of such journey. But Kripalaniji kept on pressing me to go along with him to Patna. However, about half past eight in the evening, I arrived at the station and got a seat in a compartment at some considerable distance from Mahatmaji. Kripalaniji after having taken all possible care to make me comfortable, joined Mahatmaji in his compartment. Getting into the train, my first thought was that on my arrival at Patna, I must write to my teacher explaining the whole situation, and when he had heard all about it, I felt sure, he would not take me to task. If I had to return to Banaras, I must get down at Moghal Sarai about one in the morning. But having made up my mind to go to Patna and knowing that the train would reach there at day-break, I went to sleep quite unconcernedly.\*

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\* At this point a chapter has been omitted, describing a day of watching Mahatma Gandhi during a speaking tour in a country district. — Ed.

### CHAPTER III

#### MEETING AND ACQUAINTANCE

Immediately after Mahatmaji's arrival, goat's milk, the usual food for Mahatmaji, was requisitioned. We were told that it had been sent for, but had not arrived. Jamnadas \* was quite upset at finding that it was not yet ready. Shortly after the milk came, and after much hurrying to and fro it was warmed and got ready, and brought before Mahatmaji. But he would not take it. Jamnadas looked pale in sorrow at this turn of events. I learnt that Mahatmaji had not had a morsel of food the whole day, but had expressed a wish that he would have his meal at Sasaram. But the sun had gone down before the goat's milk could be got ready; and it was his practice, it was reported to me, not to take anything after sunset.

As soon as he had arrived, the local leaders came and entered into conversation with him. But Mahatmaji was then thoroughly exhausted after the day's journey; while on the top of it all had been the day's fast. And there remained for him yet to address a public meeting at Sasaram. So just to give a little respite, it was arranged to put off the meeting for two hours. The other gentlemen also took their leave. But outside, the noise was horrible. The room occupied by him had three or four doors facing the road, and they had all to be closed. But such a crowd had assembled there and had been making such noise that one suspected the doors might be broken open any moment. I was standing at a corner of the room; Mahatmaji noticed me, and by a motion of his fingers called my attention to a lamp at a distance. I thought he was asking me to turn down the wick a bit to enjoy greater repose. But the fact was otherwise; he

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\* Mahatma Gandhi's nephew.

wanted the light for his use. As soon as I grasped his meaning I took the lamp and placed it before him. That instant he took out his papers from his portfolio and fell to work.

It was for the first time now that he gave me something to do by way of direction. Before this when the tyre had burst and he was talking to the old lady, his attention had been in the first instance drawn to me as a new-comer who had been travelling in his company. I thought that as he had seen me before as one of the company, he was prompted to give me the direction. Otherwise, as I could see from my experience during these two days, it was not his practice to ask a stranger or a new-comer to do his bidding. Seeing him intent on work, I left the room for the verandah outside. Returning shortly after, I found him gently discussing something with Kripalaniji. The moment Kripalaniji saw me, he broke out—"Is there any dearth of men? Here's Krishnadas, for instance, who, if you could but persuade him, might very well manage your work." Mahatmaji replied, "How shall I take away from you your man and let your work suffer?" Kripalaniji answered, "He is not one of my men." Then Mahatmaji began by questioning Kripalaniji about me. After a brief exchange of words with the Professor, and without questioning me at all, Mahatmaji came to the decision to send me out to Ahmedabad as assistant editor to *Young India*. He then informed Kripalaniji that to relieve me of all worry and put me also on the way to learn the work, he would send down Shri Mahadev Desai from Allahabad to Ahmedabad instructing him to be there for two or three months. Kripalaniji said, "If Krishnadas goes, there would be no further need of sending Mahadev." Mahatmaji had already risen from his seat to go and have a wash. But when he heard Kripalaniji speak those words, his face beamed with pleasure, and he broke out with the remark, "Indeed!" Then with a motion of his fingers, pointing at me, he exclaimed, "Then certainly, you will have to join me?"



I was simply astounded at this happening. My teacher had definitely warned me against joining Mahatmaji in his tours lest I should be caught in a whirl of work. For I was then in such a weak state of health that it was out of the question for me to undertake any responsible work. But look at what has happened! It was out of my regard for Kripalaniji that I had agreed to come here to Sasaram while bound for Patna. Ere this I had been offered the opportunity to get introduced to Mahatmaji, but I had deliberately declined it. But now he himself had come forward to talk to me; and he not merely talked to me, but he would have me undertake a responsibility for him and leave for Ahmedabad for the purpose. Feeling the oppressive strain of such thoughts, I came out of Mahatmaji's room as soon as he had left for the wash, and threw myself in an arm-chair on the verandah, and gave myself up to endless speculation. Coming across Kripalaniji, I remonstrated with him for his having thrown me into such an embarrassing situation. I tried also to bring home to him how utterly impracticable his proposal was; but he gave no heed to my words. On the contrary he tried to bring me round by saying that it was absolutely necessary that I should go; that if I could by ever so little bring down the burden of Mahatmaji's worries, it would be no small service done to the country. Finding that it was useless to go on arguing with the Professor, I proposed to him that I should myself go and frankly state before Mahatmaji all my difficulties; and that I may be enabled to do so I made the request that the Professor should help me by arranging for an interview.

Soon after, I was sent for. Entering Mahatmaji's room I found that everybody else was sent away, and that Mahatmaji himself was waiting, so it appeared to me, in an attitude of eager expectancy to hear what I might have to say. I lost no time in telling him that I was already engaged in rendering service to my teacher at Banaras; that he had grown old, and that it was not for me to leave him and go elsewhere. Here Kripalaniji interposed and

made light of my objection. He said that he himself would take the burden of the work on his shoulders. After this, of course, I could not press my point with the same force. Mahatmaji now suggested that he himself was ready and willing to write to my teacher, Shri Mukerji, and get his views. After all these proposals, I thought I must clear my position further by raising some other points. I pointed out that Kripalaniji cherished an affectionate liking for me and, therefore, was led to form an exaggerated view of my powers. In truth, my capacities were far less than what he had imagined. Further, having never associated nor worked with Mahatmaji, I was hardly in a position to understand his point of view. Therefore, for me to go to Ahmedabad to take up a new responsibility, neither attracted me, nor was it a source of encouragement for me. At this Mahatmaji said that I need not worry over all that; Mahadev would come and set me on the way. And he went on to speak at length in high praise of Shri Mahadev Desai. He then proceeded to explain that the movement of the spirit which he wanted to inaugurate in the country was undoubtedly based on old Indian ideals; nevertheless it was his intention to give it a new orientation. Therefore, to understand his point of view required a little penetrative insight, and his words must have to be scanned accordingly. And so he went on explaining many things about his message. Every single objection of mine was thus rendered of no effect. He on whom was rivetted the gaze of India and before the power of whose resplendent spirituality cowered the spirit of the mighty British Government, was it for me to carry on a war of words with such a personality? I was feeling ashamed even to think of opposing his wishes any further, and so I said nothing further. By this time Maulana Mohammed Ali came to ask Mahatmaji to start for the meeting. Mahatmaji was instantly on his legs. While leaving he left word with Professor Kripalani that I should also attend the meeting.

It was then ten at night. We had not even then had our meal. Further, the whole day I had been starving;

and then there was the great strain to which I was subjected on account of the crowd at so many different places. The result was that I was thoroughly knocked up. But I had no choice left to me when I learnt that Mahatmaji had left instructions that I should attend the meeting. So in the company of Kripalaniji and Babu Rambinode I went to the place of the meeting. The entrance by which one passed to the platform had then been closed. The crowd hanging about the gate was too big. We succeeded in making our way through the crowd, and the gate was instantly opened for us, but considerable numbers entered in our wake, which led to much pushing and jostling about. Kripalaniji and Rambinode Babu instantly got upon the platform; but for myself, partly out of shyness, and partly because of pressure about me I was delaying. Meanwhile the volunteers having failed to cope with the crowd, a free fight began, and a few blows also fell on my back. Noticing this Maulana Mohammed Ali called out to me with the words, "Don't be so slow, man," and reaching out his hand pulled me up on to the platform.

It was a huge gathering; no less than twenty thousand people must have assembled in front of us. On the platform, besides Mahatmaji and Maulana Mohammed Ali, I noticed a few provincial leaders of Bihar. Babu Rajendraprasad spoke first according welcome, and was followed by Mahatmaji. Next Maulana Mohammed Ali spoke. It was then past eleven. It was not possible for me to hear any of these speeches with anything like attention. There was gnawing hunger in the stomach; there was the heaviness of sleep in the eyes; while the body itself was ready to drop through exhaustion. At this point Kripalaniji and Rambinode Babu expressed by a gesture their desire to leave the meeting. I assented, and then we three quietly got down from the platform and returned to our quarters.

We had our meal after which I went to bed. After a short spell of sleep I awoke and saw Mahatmaji just returning from the meeting. He took his seat on a cot

just near me and as soon as the bed was made ready for him, he lay down on it. He was so exhausted! At intervals I heard him sighing heavily and reciting the words, "Shree Rama, Shree Rama".\*

I rose at an early hour before dawn, and finishing ablution got myself ready. Mahatmaji also rose; and when he had finished washing hands and mouth breakfast was placed before him. His meal over, he handed up to me the saucer, the milk-cup and the spoon to scour and clean. There were many people about longing to serve him even in this humble way. I was a new-comer whose acquaintance with him was but one day old. But even so, he had looked upon me as one so closely related that he had unhesitatingly asked me to clean his utensils. I felt extremely happy. When I had done the cleansing he called me again, and handing to me a paper and pencil asked me to write out in English a report of his previous night's speech. I had listened to that speech half asleep. Moreover, since early in the morning a howling crowd was waiting outside. Neither was my brain cool. In the circumstances, I did not know whether I could at all reproduce the speech. I felt also that I must lose no time to go back to Banaras and report to Shri Mukerji, my teacher, the previous evening's proposals. A train for Banaras was to leave at 8-30 a.m. So I saw Mahatmaji again and expressed my wish to leave by that train. I told him that I proposed to write out the speech while travelling, and, if my teacher agreed, to come back and meet him at Patna three days later.

He readily gave his consent to my proposals; but he asked me to put to my teacher three questions on his behalf. Firstly, whether he thought I had the requisite qualification for the work in question; secondly, whether he would accord me his permission; and thirdly, if he gave me his permission, whether I should have his blessings also. Then Mahatmaji asked me if it was well that he should send through me a letter to my teacher.

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\* One of the Hindu names of God.

I said it was not necessary. Then snatching a hasty breakfast, and before starting for the station, I again went into his presence to take my leave. I saw him very busy at that time over many things, and discussing matters; but he gave me a gracious look and bade me goodbye. Before parting he repeated his request that I must not forget to write out a report of his Sasaram speech. Though it was only a single day's acquaintance yet he treated me so cordially that I took courage for the first time now to touch his feet by way of obeisance. \*

#### CHAPTER IV

#### GAUHATI

At Gauhati† Mahatmaji stayed at Shri Tarunram Phookan's place. In front of his residence was a wide extensive open lawn where not less than fifty thousand people could assemble in a meeting. Beyond, was the public road, and further beyond was the river Brahmaputra. The whole lawn had been fenced round to keep back the crowd who might otherwise have invaded our quarters and troubled Mahatmaji. At short intervals in the fence, arches had been put up, where night and day volunteers kept guard. This, of course, kept the crowd out, but the workers who had assembled from all the different parts of Assam to invite Mahatmaji to their respective towns formed a goodly crowd by themselves. Thus not for one moment was rest or peace to be found. The incessant noise almost drove one mad. I wondered how long we should be able at all to stand the strain of such noise after the fatigue and exhaustion of our previous journey.

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\* In the original, many chapters are given to describing a tour with Mahatmaji over many parts of India. Of this, the three following chapters have been retained to give an idea of the immense interest which the people had in Gandhi and his influence over them. — Ed.

† In Assam province.

On the *maidan* in front of our residence, a public meeting was held in the evening. According to my estimate, some twenty-five thousand people must have assembled there. A little to the right of Mahatmaji's room was put up a raised platform for the accommodation of the leaders. I was there for a short while to listen to Mahatmaji's speech. I soon returned and watched the proceedings from our house. Mahatmaji's speech was rendered into the Assamese language by Shri Phookan. About 9 p.m. the meeting was dissolved; but the moment before, Mahatmaji speaking for a second time,, made a feeling appeal to the assembly as follows: "What special object had they in inviting and bringing him to such a distant part of the country as this? Would they content themselves with merely hearing him speak and then quietly return to their homes? Or, was it their object to allay his heart's agony by helping him in redressing the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs, and in the winning of Swaraj or freedom for India? If, indeed, they had come merely to hear him speak, he begged them all with folded hands not to trouble him further, but permit him to go back." When this part of the speech was explained by Shri Phookan to the whole audience of Assamese, a wonderful scene followed. For the space of a whole minute almost the place was stilled into complete silence. The minds of all seemed to have for a moment become rivetted to one single thought, and the whole audience was moved by a singular unanimity of feeling. When in a river the flood-tide comes, closely following upon the ebb-tide, for a time the current flows neither way, and there is perfect calm; but the next moment with a roar comes the flood sweeping everything before it. Much like this was the scene that followed at the meeting. When the full meaning of Mahatmaji's appeal dawned upon them, the whole audience after a momentary pause, with one voice broke out into a thundering roar, saying, "No, no, that must never be; we can never allow you to leave us and go back in the way proposed." He would presently test the genuineness of their enthusiasm, rejoined

Mahatmaji. If, indeed, they longed for Swaraj, and if their anxiety to take him to the other places of Assam was at all sincere, let them surrender the foreign clothes they had on and cast them into the fire he would be presently lighting. This said, he set fire to the huge collection of foreign clothes lying in front of the platform. At that time a sort of frenzy seized the whole crowd, and from all sides foreign clothes rained in heaps upon the burning pile. In the crowd, some there were who were seen to cover their nakedness with their towels or their *chaddars*,\* consigning their *dhotis* to the flames. My pen fails to portray the fit of divine enthusiasm that had seized the audience. In such large quantities were clothes offered to the sacrificial fire that it kept on burning till the whole of the succeeding morning.

Mahatmaji slept that night on the verandah adjoining his room, while I lay in an easy chair by his side. Nearby a volunteer kept guard all the night through. The Assamese volunteers had captured my imagination. Their discipline and endurance were only equalled by their spirit of devoted service. Since we had been here, we had not to bestow one single thought on anything concerning our own selves. For the one thought of these volunteers was that we should suffer not the least inconvenience. Their spirit of service, the sweetness of their temper, and their capacity for work filled us with high hopes about the future of Assam.

Getting up early in the morning, and finding Mahatmaji alone for a while, I handed him the cuttings from the *Servant* containing Shri Andrews' "Four Letters". I told him also the gist of those "letters". When I had finished, he merely gave a nod. So many people would be constantly crowding round him that if perchance he would snatch a few moments of spare time, he would spend them wholly on his work of reading and writing. One was simply amazed to find how in

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\* Sheet of fine cloth thrown loosely over the body, like a shawl.

the midst of all this confusion he could keep his head cool and get through the scheduled course of his work. Under such circumstances, ordinary people would go mad. When after such incessant work, he would be left alone for a while, I would not come near him for fear of disturbing him. That is why I had refrained from placing before him those articles on the previous day, nor had he himself asked for them. My belief is that having given an order to anybody, he would not put pressure upon him, but would patiently wait and see whether the instruction was actually carried out. He would, it appeared to me, test people's sense of responsibility by noting whether the work was got through smoothly enough. That morning, once or twice, I had seen him perusing the report I had prepared of his Sasaram speech. He could hardly have finished reading it; for after every two or three lines of reading, visitor after visitor came and caused interruption. Since morning he had gone out on three or four occasions to attend different meetings. There was the meeting of the Marwadi merchants, another of Assamese ladies, and a third of Bengali ladies.

During our second day's stay at Gauhati, late in the afternoon, another huge meeting was held on the same *maidan*. His speech over, Mahatmaji quickly returned to partake of his meal, for it was his practice to take nothing after sunset. As neither Jamnadas nor Prabhudas was at home at the time, he called me and asked me to get his meal ready. The meal over, he again went out, having given me instructions to keep hot water and the other things necessary for his evening bath ready. When about to depart, he asked me to write out a report of the speech he had just delivered, for submission to him. When I enquired if it was to be a lengthy one, he said that a brief report might do, but it was necessary that all important matters and ideas should be incorporated in it.

In that speech of his he had replied to the various letters he had received from many educated Assamese in which they had given expression to their regret that in his *Hind Swaraj* or *Indian Home Rule* he had treated the



Assamese as belonging to the same category as the Bhils, Pindaris and Thugs, and such other wild tribes. Mahatmaji said that the book had been composed in 1908 during his sojourn in England. Till then he had not come in contact with any native of Assam, nor had he then any first-hand knowledge of the country. His knowledge of Assam had, in fact, been derived from one or two English books. From a study of these books he had been led to infer that Assam had not evolved any sort of civilization. Now, however, having seen Assam with his own eyes, he had realized his mistake. He further explained that in his book, he had said nothing which was intended to cast aspersions upon the people of Assam. The English people had claimed that the reclamation of the uncivilized races of India was their exclusive work. In going to refute that allegation, for want of a first-hand knowledge, and echoing merely the statements of the English themselves, he had cited the case of the Assamese people in the particular manner to which objection had been taken.

After this explanation, the voice of complaint was no further heard ; but on the morning of the day on which Mahatmaji left Gauhati, some ancient relics of Assamese civilization and culture were produced before him. A certain antiquarian scholar showed him a number of ancient works in manuscript composed in the Assamese language. One of these was a work relating to elephant lore which was interesting to a degree, and wholly novel in character. Elephants were classified under various types, and each such type was described at length ; while recourse was had to pictorial illustrations for the purpose of expounding its special features. The analysis and investigation of the subject were carried out with such a minute nicety as to excite wonder. Then we saw the Assamese translations of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. These were perhaps older than the Bengali translations. Then we saw some old beautifully woven specimens of Assamese cloth, as old as a hundred years, but were so well preserved as to look quite fresh. Next, we were shown how yarn for the famous Assamese cloth

known as *endi-muga* was produced. Every home in Assam has a handloom of its own, and the women of Assam are all expert weavers. In fact, no girl could be given in marriage unless she knew weaving. In Barrister Phookan's home also we found two looms, and a little girl gave a demonstration on them. No mere oral description could ever have given us such idea of what Assamese civilization was like, as its ocular demonstration. Instead, therefore, of attempting to establish the claim of their own culture by mere word of mouth, the Assam leaders did well to produce these visible evidences, and by so doing were able the more easily to enlist Mahatma-ji's sympathies on behalf of their own province.

Assam has many close points of contact with Eastern Bengal. It seemed to me that the soil and crops of Assam, her mighty rivers, and the manners and habits of her people, bore no small resemblance to those of Eastern Bengal. The vernacular of Assam is now being recognized as a distinct language; and the educated classes of the province in their anxiety to preserve their separate entity have been latterly paying the deference and homage due to whatever is peculiarly Assamese. But to me it appeared that Assamese had much in common with the spoken language of Eastern Bengal, the difference in script being negligible. The food of the people of Eastern Bengal and that of the Assamese, together with the respective modes of their preparation, were all more or less the same. At least my experience at Gauhati pointed to that conclusion.

## CHAPTER V

### JORHAT

We passed the whole night in train. On the morning of the 24th August, we stopped at Titabar station, where we changed train, and in the course of the same day arrived at Jorhat. We had hitherto been travelling due east through an altogether unfamiliar country, and it seemed as though our journey would have no ending. It was a surprise to find how Mahatmaji's name had penetrated into those remote corners of Assam. Even in the depth of the night, we could hear cries of *Mahatma Gandhi ki Jay* (Victory to Mahatma Gandhi) at every station where the train had to stop. It had become so familiar a thing to hear these cries from the lips of large multitudes that ordinarily it would not attract our attention. But hearing it in these distant solitudes of Assam, our curiosity was roused, and we could not help looking out of our train. At many a small station we saw people assembled from distant villages, and waiting with lighted torches for Mahatmaji's *darshan*. Those who have been brought up in the lap of luxury in towns and cities, and whose eyes have become habituated to gas and electric lights, might view with amusement or contempt the torch-lights, the half-naked bodies, the rustic talk and the manners of these poor illiterate countrymen of ours; but more than anything else such a reception as this was eloquent of the power of the movement, and the extent to which Mahatmaji's influence had permeated the masses.

It was 8 or 9 in the morning when we reached Jorhat. After holding two or three meetings that day, we had again to pack up and leave in the evening. Owing to heavy rains overnight, there were pools of water on the site chosen for the public meeting but the meeting was held there nevertheless. While the meeting was on, the

sun suddenly shone with such fierce blaze that a couple of persons fainted on the spot. In the middle of the meeting a couple of robust Gurkha sepoy came elbowing their way through the crowd, and stood just in front of the platform facing Mahatmaji and Maulana Mohammed Ali. They wore grim, fierce-looking, forms while they began surveying everything from end to end. Maulana Mohammed Ali, who was speaking at the time, had a word or two in reference to them also in his speech. But when he sat down the whole assembly rang with joyous cries of "Victory to Mahatma Gandhi", the scene moved even the hearts of the Gurkhas. They could no longer preserve their haughty looks; their frightful mien suffered a sudden change, and they joined the crowd in their loud cries of "Victory to Mahatma Gandhi". I followed them for some distance after the meeting had broken up. I found them walking as if in a delirium of joyous excitement. It was there that I could realize how infectious was the collective enthusiasm of a crowd, and how rapid its working. The language, the feelings and associations of the Gurkhas were so different from those of the crowd, and yet their haughty courage had to bow before the power of this collective moral force.

In the evening we took the light railway from Jorhat. After going as far as Mariani by this line, we were to take next morning the bigger train of the Assam Bengal Railway for Dibrugarh. The Jorhat line was the narrowest gauge line that I had seen in India. The carriages looked like so many toys. Sometimes one could even run faster than the train. The carriages were in such bad repair that, when the train began to move, we were afraid that the whole of it might come down with a crash. The doors once opened would not close again. At night there was no light in the train. Such was this railway line, and we were to travel by a special train on that line! That night's experiences of the special train, could never be forgotten. I had not had any rest throughout the day and so I went to sleep, as soon as I got into the train. We had been told that the train was to leave at ten o'clock, but

we found no proper arrangement at the station itself. Apparently there was no fixed time-table on this line, no bother about "Line clear" and other things of the kind; they could start at any time that they liked. In my sleep, I knew not when the train had started, but suddenly, when the night was far advanced, we were roused from sleep by a sudden shock. Starting up, we began to raise a hue and cry. The train had then stopped. Some of us, going out to enquire about the matter, learnt that our train collided with a couple of carriages that had got detached from behind the train that had preceded us, and had been blocking the line. None of us had sustained any injuries but we were at a loss to make out how our train was to proceed, the road being blocked. With no other alternative before it, our train began slowly to labour on, pushing the blocking carriages before it. Our little engine could hardly muster enough energy for this work; the poor thing had to stop at every step to take breath in the midst of this pushing and fuming. When we had proceeded about a mile in this fashion, the guard came running with a Deitz lantern in hand, and fell to abusing the driver. We then came to learn from him that, in the midst of our train's desperate effort, Mahatmaji's carriage had dropped out from the rear, and been left far behind us. We all came to see how things stood and discovered that Mahatmaji's carriage had in fact been left behind. We were beside ourselves with fear. We were taking along with us one who was the life and soul of India, and each one of us, we felt, was responsible for his safety and welfare more or less. But here we had cast him away in the dead of night in a wilderness with nobody by his side. We then called upon the driver to back the train, and as the train moved back, we all stood on the foot-board and kept looking out with eager, outstretched gaze. When after traversing a long distance we sighted Mahatmaji's carriage in the moonlight, all of us ran up to it and stood encircling it. Seeing us all he burst out laughing; nor could we trace the least anxiety or fear in his countenance. He laughingly told us that he

had not thought that we should return, but was rather expecting that a train from behind would come and overturn his carriage. Even a serious mishap like this did not make him anxious, nor did he show any signs of displeasure at his being deprived of his nightly rest ; nor did we hear from his lips one word of disparagement of the railway authorities at this mismanagement on their part.

## CHAPTER VI

### DIBRUGARH

Owing to the mishaps of the night, we were very late in reaching the Mariani station, where, when we came up, the train of the Assam Bengal Railway was waiting ready to start. It had been specially detained for us. As soon as we arrived, we made haste to get into it. The people at the station helped in carrying our luggage and putting it into the train as quickly as possible. In Assam, Mahatmaji was everywhere treated with royal honours. The volunteers had hoisted two large tri-colour national flags and they were floating on either side of Mahatmaji's compartment. As Mahatmaji disliked travelling in pomp and grandeur, he begged that the flags might be removed ; but they were not taken away. Dibrugarh is a great centre of the tea-industry. It is therefore a place where many Englishmen would be continually coming and going on business. In our train, too, there were some English passengers, who did not like Mahatmaji's making a triumphal progress with flying colours. Now, as the train was moving very fast, the big bamboo pole to which the left-hand flag was attached, struck violently against a post, and broke in two, and the flag getting detached was seen flying away. At this, three or four Europeans looking out of the train, fell to clapping and shouting for joy. On the train itself, at the doors at short intervals, were able Assamese volunteers wearing

distinctive turbans keeping guard. One of these, seeing the flag fly off, caught hold of it at great personal risk, and held it out with outstretched hands with his face towards those Europeans. At this exhibition of uncommon courage and celerity they hung down their heads in shame and disappeared from view out of the train. Today when I think of this little incident, my heart goes out in admiration to the Assamese. For me-thinks when our English officials, having flung Mahatma-ji into prison, should boast of having broken the flag-staff of the Non-co-operation movement, shall see how, in every province of India, the flag would be caught up once again and firmly held in the hand, they, too, shall have to hang down their heads in shame like those English planters of Assam.

The train having stopped at a particular station on the way, Prabhudas took me to Mahatmaji's compartment, and gave me some fruits to eat. Then I saw Mahatmaji reading and correcting my report of his Sasaram speech. He had been reading it carefully word by word, and handing it to me, asked me to note the corrections he had made. After I had read it, he sent it for publication in *Young India*. As I found Mahatmaji looking grave at all times, I rarely went to him unless sent for. I suppose he assumed this seriousness in order to get through his work. Once or twice, I had even seen him cooling his forehead and head with ice. And yet everyday, whether in his room or in the train, he would go on calmly and patiently writing articles for the *Navajivan*, and *Young India*, while all around him people were making noise and the crowds were howling outside. Such complete mastery over the mind seemed to me unique. When he had done with the report of the Sasaram speech, he took up that of his Gauhati speech, but put it by, having looked through it a little.

At 12 noon on the 25th August, we reached Dibrugarh, almost the easternmost extremity of Assam, from where our return journey was to begin. We were to stay there the whole day and till 2 p.m. the next day, when

we were to take the train for Silchar. From Silchar we were to proceed to Sylhet, thence to Chittagong and from Chittagong to Barisal via Chandpur; and from Barisal after a day's stay, we were to come back to Calcutta on the 4th September. Invitations had poured in from Comilla, Khulna, and other places, but Mahatmaji had declined them all. He was bound to reach Calcutta before the 6th September, as on that day a meeting of the Working Committee had been arranged.

Reaching Dibrugarh, I took my bath and meal and was resting for a while when I was sent for by Mahatmaji. He gave me some telegrams to despatch, and then asked me to compile for his use, from Gazetteers and other Government publications, all material facts and figures about tea-plantations and the conditions of labour in Assam. Just then, came Shri Nabin Bardolai, who had all the facts concerning Assam at his finger-ends, and who promptly answered every question put to him by Mahatmaji. The astonishing mastery of facts and figures relating to Assam shown by Shri Bardolai was a revelation to me.

At Dibrugarh Mahatmaji took special 'trouble' to gather information on the conditions of labour in the tea-gardens. As that night's meeting was to be his last in Assam, he wished to address some words of comfort to the poor oppressed labourers. It was in his name that the labourers had come out of the tea-gardens at the time of the Chandpur trouble, but it was not possible then for him to come and stand by their side. Now that Mahatmaji was in Assam the planters were in mortal dread that his visit should revive the excitement of those days. The planters had therefore taken to threats and so cowed the labourers that they dared not come to meet Mahatmaji. Thus when at the night's public meeting, desiring to know how many labourers had actually attended the meeting, Mahatmaji called upon the labourers present to raise their hands, it was found that not more than three or four had the courage to do so, notwithstanding that the audience numbered some ten to fifteen thousand. Secretly,



however, a cooly had already come and seen Mahatmaji at his residence, and given him a full account of their woes.

At the public meeting, Mahatmaji gave expression to some of his deepest thoughts and convictions. He explained what sort of Swaraj it was that he craved for India, and how a whole-hearted pursuit of Swadeshi, even as a religious discipline, was essential for the attainment of such Swaraj. The mere transference of political power into the hands of Indians from those of Englishmen would, indeed, be a sort of Swaraj. But he argued that the test of its genuineness lay in the answer to the question, whether it had brought peace to the hearts of the poor, whether it had enabled them to live happy, contented lives. If these questions could not be answered in the affirmative, then India had nothing at all to gain from such Swaraj. There were in Assam almost a million labourers who had come from different provinces of India to earn a bare subsistence, and Mahatmaji declared how unnatural, from a social point of view, it was that so many poor Indians should be driven to leave their homes, their families, their friends and their communities, merely to get the wherewithal to live. If this state of things could not be changed under the new regime then the attainment of Swaraj would be a snare and a delusion. That was why he had been laying so much stress on spinning and weaving, and the wearing of *khaddar*. Mahatmaji went on explaining at length that the country's welfare could not be completely secured and the woes of the poor removed, unless each and every home had learnt to depend on itself for its clothing, much in the same way as each home had learnt to prepare its own food, instead of being dependent for it on hotels. It was, therefore, a religious duty for them to take the vow of Swadeshi, and it was because the use of foreign cloth was a deadly obstacle to the fulfilment of that duty he was never so happy as when destroying it wherever it was found. Not being able to understand aright his feeling about the matter, many, he said, had been finding

fault with him on the ground that it was a feeling born of hatred of the foreigner.

But his answer was that if they would but calmly be-think themselves of the volume of suffering that foreign cloth had brought in its train, of the many millions that had died of famine, as well of those who had been dragging on a miserable existence on empty or half-filled stomachs, then they could not help agreeing with him in regarding such foreign cloth as truly impure and un-touchable. He burnt foreign cloth not out of a spirit of hatred for foreigners, but in the spirit in which they would burn the clothes of a plague-stricken man. That was why he felt never so happy as when destroying foreign cloth worn by Indians. The sin of wearing foreign cloth was, to his mind, worse than the sin of using intoxicating drugs, all the more so because it was an unconscious sin. Hence it was that, in speaking of self-purification, he gave as important a place to the boycott of foreign cloth as to the avoidance of-intoxicants, and the control of the evil passions of anger, violence, hatred and the like.

In every town of Assam he had visited, Mahatmaji had made a bonfire of foreign cloth, but at Dibrugarh alone no arrangement had been made for the same. The enthusiasm of the people however was by no means less here than elsewhere, but the work suffered for want of a devoted and selfless leader. Mahatmaji was very sorry that he had not been able to make this holy sacrifice on that last day of his stay in Assam. Sheth Jamnalalji, instead of accompanying us to Jorhat, had gone straight to Dibrugarh from Nowgong. The foreign cloth trade of Assam was all in the hands of the Marwadis, and Dibrugarh was the chief centre of that trade. Jamnalalji, therefore, wanted to stay with the Marwadis of this place for a few days, and induce them to take the Swadeshi vow. Everywhere, at his instance, special meetings of Marwadis were held, at which they gave their signatures to a written promise to boycott foreign cloth. At some places they offered to give an undertaking not to import foreign cloth but only for one year. To this Mahatmaji did not

agree, for, from his point of view, in this matter of Swadeshi, no yielding or compromise was permissible.

Mahatmaji concluded his Assam programme with a friendly meeting and talk with the Planters' Association at Dibrugarh. He was to leave Dibrugarh at 2 p.m. on the 26th August, and his visit to the Planters' Club had been put down for 10 o'clock on that day. None knew whom he would take with him; and as he had told me nothing about it, I was not in readiness to go. Meanwhile, Mahatmaji had left so that he might be there punctually at the appointed time. Jamnadas, however, insisted upon my going and I drove in a carriage. On reaching the Club, I found Mahatmaji seated in the midst of the planters. In the middle of the room was a big table, on one side of which were the seats for visitors. Among the leaders, I saw Maulana Mohammed Ali, Sheth Jamnalalji, and some of the chief men of Assam. We were also there—Prabhudas, Hirowe and myself. I had been given to understand that the planters of Assam wielded immense power and that common people dared not approach them. But who could keep back the surging crowd today now that Mahatmaji was there? Even the commonest coolies, who usually fled at the sight of Europeans, had group after group by stealthy steps advanced to the precincts of the Club, and finding that none prevented them had even dared to enter it, with the result that it became very hard to keep order inside. As it was the wish of the planters that their conversation with Mahatmaji should remain private, no report was taken of any of the speeches made. But the crowd made it impossible to hold a quiet private conversation. There was so much noise around that it was a wonder that the planters could bear it all with such exemplary patience and quiet dignity. When, however, in response to a request from the President of the Association, Mahatmaji began his talk, then for once all noise was hushed. I had never heard him speak in English, as all his speeches hitherto had been in Hindi; but when he made this speech, I knew not whether to call it a speech, or an

inspired utterance, pregnant with celestial force. His style was altogether plain and unadorned, but every single word came from the innermost depths of his heart, and acted like a charm. Hence the mere sounds of his words pierced and entered the hearts of his hearers. As he went on talking in a solemn strain, it seemed as though he was casting a hypnotic spell over the audience, and irresistibly drawing all hearts to himself. I noticed that, as he spoke there was no motion in his eyes, nor was there the slightest movement of the limbs. It was clear to me that at the time his mind must also have attained a state of absolute calm. For how else could his words create such an atmosphere of peace in the hearts of the hearers? I had never before heard such criticisms, so truthful and yet so sweet and severe, as came from Mahatmaji's lips. He detailed to his hearers all the charges that Indians could bring against the European planters, giving also at the same time all his previous personal experiences on the matter he was discussing. I could hardly tell what power it was that had enabled him to win the planters so completely over, that in spite of the severe condemnation he had passed on them, not only did none dare to raise his voice in reply, but speaker after speaker from among them rose to thank him for his fearlessness, outspokenness and to promise that they would in future try to follow the ideal that he had set before them.

On Mahatmaji's coming out after the meeting was over the crowd rushed at him, each man trying to elbow his way into his presence. Prabhudas, Hirowe and myself, on coming out, saw that the crowd round Mahatmaji was so big that it was hopeless for us to try to reach the car. So advancing a little we stood on the road and waited, thinking that we might be given a lift when the car passed that way. But as soon as the car started, the people began running after it, and we were lost in the crowd. When the crowd broke up, as there was no carriage for us, we did not know how to get back. None of us knew the way, and the time for the train was also approaching. By asking a man we came to know that

there was no chance of our catching the train if we started walking the distance to our quarters. So, instead of returning to our place, we made straight for the station, where soon after Mahatmaji with the other members of the party arrived. There was a large gathering on the platform and outside, and every one was trying to force his way into Mahatmaji's presence. Fearing that this might lead to a rush, and that the crowd might get out of control, Mahatmaji got up on a stool or chair. Now he was visible to everybody, even to those that were standing at a distance and nobody stirred from his place, and there was no more trouble.

## CHAPTER VII

### "SILENCE ! SILENCE !"

We left Madras city on the morning of the 17th September, and speeded south in the direction of Rameshwaram. After touring Tamilnad, Mahatmaji was to visit certain districts of the Andhra country on the northern route to Bombay. The programme of his tour in the Andhra districts had been already settled, but there was some delay in fixing the Tamilnad programme. So, for the present, he decided to go to Trichinopoly, after visiting Porto Novo, Cuddalore and Kumbhakonam.

Leaving our place, while it was still dark, we reached the Egmore station (Madras), when it was about day-break, to take the Rameshwaram Express. It was a metre-gauge section of the South Indian Railway ; the carriages were of small size, but there was the convenience of a long corridor leading from one extremity of the train to the other. As soon as the train drew up along the platform, we hurriedly got in with all our luggage. There was no great crowd at the station. One thing I noticed throughout our tour in the South was that volunteers were

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\* From here the party went through Bengal to Calcutta and then south to Madras. Meanwhile Maulana Mohammed Ali was arrested.

much less in evidence there than elsewhere. Reaching the Villupuram station at 10 or 11, we found the crowd forming such a solid mass that, in the expressive Bengali phrase, not even a mustard seed if let fall could find its way to the ground. There being no volunteers to regulate the crowd, everybody was trying to calm and restrain his fellows and this only gave rise to a greater confusion and uproar. Some were pressing down those that were standing before them, and calling upon them to sit down, lustily crying "Okka-rungo! Okka-rungo," i.e. "sit down, sit down," while others were trying to silence them with shouts of "Shattam podadey" "Shattam podadey", i.e. "silence, silence!" which only added to the volume of the noise. While this terrible uproar and confusion was in full swing, Mahatmaji got out from the train for a while, and soon returned with a bagful of rupees for the Tilak Swaraj Fund. But for us getting out was simply unthinkable. If we got out there was no hope of our coming back to our places, for the pushing and jostling was so great that we were bound to drift far, far away. So we sat tight in our own places. In the meanwhile, a batch of some ten or twenty would make their way perspiring through the crowd, and gaze at us through the window of our carriage. They had soon to retire, being forced to leave under pressure from behind, and would be presently succeeded by another batch of some ten or twenty, and so on till the train left the station. There was an air of quickness in the speech, the actions, and the general movements of the Tamil people, which I had not particularly noticed among the people of other provinces I had so far come across.

Reaching Porto Novo at 1-30 p.m., we were the guests of a Dutch lady, by name Miss Peterson, who lived at a great distance from the station. Though a foreigner and Christian, she was dressed in *sari* like all Indian women, and walked barefoot like them. She had also learnt to speak Tamil. We saw a good number of spinning wheels in her house; she had to give lessons in spinning to Indian ladies of the place, and I could easily guess that

she held Mahatmaji in high esteem. She had built a school, and she had resolved to get it opened by Mahatmaji. There were with her at the time two other European ladies, who had come to assist her in her work of hospitality. They were, however, dressed in European costume, but the way in which they ministered to our comforts left nothing to be desired.

After performing the opening ceremony of Miss Peterson's school, Mahatmaji was to motor to Cuddalore, a distance of some twenty miles, to address a meeting there. As there was not much time, Mahatmaji was urged to make haste. But no sooner had he arrived at Porto Novo than a number of Christian ladies and gentlemen engaged him in a religious talk with them, and he entered into a heart to heart talk with them, as though he was a brother in faith. He informed them that in South Africa his most intimate friends were mostly Christians, and then he began to tell his reminiscences in connection with them. A time had also come in his own life when he was faced with the question of embracing Christianity, but God had ordained otherwise. On this an Indian Christian lady said that they had still hopes of his conversion, as it was their faith that there was no hope of salvation for any one who did not accept Christianity. Christ alone was the Prince of Peace, and nobody else could give peace. At this Mahatmaji shook his head and smiled, and said "That, of course, is your faith, but so exactly is the belief of the Hindus that Hinduism alone could give salvation, and the Mussalmans also similarly believe the same in respect of their own religion." Then alluding to a certain famous Christian missionary, he went on to say, "When I first met him in South Africa, the first question he put to me was, "Have you got peace?", to which I replied "Yes, I have." He was surprised, and asked me how, not being a Christian, I could have found peace. Then after a pause, Mahatmaji continued, "Truth to say, if only we could get at and understand the fundamentals of all the different religions, all the ill-feeling and jealousy that they have given rise

to is bound to disappear. For all the different practices and observances prescribed by different denominations have for their ultimate objective the purification of man. Nevertheless my conviction is that Hinduism is the most scientific of religions ; and therefore it is that I hug Hinduism to my bosom. In this I may not be accused of bigotry ; for I have steered my course after scrutinizing and examining everything." Among the Christian audience was a gentleman who appeared to me to be a Bengali from his general appearance and his flowing beard ; but I was soon disillusioned, for as soon as Mahatmaji had left for his bath, he began to sing aloud a Tamil song.

After visiting Miss Peterson's school Mahatmaji left for the Cuddalore meeting. I stayed behind with Prabhudas and Anwaruddin, the pupil and follower of Maulana Azad Sobhani. Poor Anwar, unable to understand Tamil, or to make himself understood through his Urdu, was now put to such trouble that he began to express his regret that the Maulana Saheb should have brought him to such a place as the Tamil country. As soon as Mahatmaji had left for Cuddalore all the noise and the hubbub ceased. There is nothing specially worth seeing at Porto Novo, but its name carries with it some historical associations. The town, first founded by the Portuguese in the 16th century, passed subsequently into the hands of one European power after another, who succeeded in establishing for the time political ascendancy in the south, finally coming into the possession of the English. Here at Porto Novo a fierce battle had been fought by the English with Hyder Ali, the famous Prince of Mysore. It is the view of some historians that, if the English had been defeated in this battle it would not have been possible for the English to establish their domination over South India. The river Vellar flows by a side of the town, falling into the sea near by. Some of the houses here belong to rich Arab traders, who have survived here as relics of a by-gone Arab supremacy on the Indian Ocean, which had lasted for many a long



century until it was finally superseded by European domination on the Indian seas.

It was one o'clock at night when Mahatmaji returned from Cuddalore ; and at 6-30 in the morning we had to leave, bag and baggage, for Kumbhakonam. Reaching the station, we found that the particular train we had intended to take was a parcels train, which carried no passengers at all. The station officials, however, were good enough to empty a carriage for us, and so we were enabled to reach Kumbhakonam at 11 o'clock. Here is a big tank, called the "Mahamakham Tank" into which the Ganga is believed to flow once in twelve years, when hundreds of thousands of people earn the merit of a bath in the Ganga by a dip in its waters. But, I who had come from the banks of the great Ganga at Banaras, could hardly be expected to enter with any feeling into the greatness of a body of waters which had only a reflected glory. That very day at 5 p.m. we were to leave Kumbhakonam again. Immediately after arriving here, Mahatmaji took to silence, which lasted till 2 p.m. after which he left for a meeting of the local weavers. His advice to them was that they must make up their minds to renounce drinking and the weaving of foreign yarn ; that they must weave *khaddar* and nothing but *khaddar*. Then he came to the public meeting. But what sort of a meeting was this ? In spite of my being by Mahatmaji's side, I found myself too weak to elbow my way to the meeting place. The noise and rush not abating even when Mahatmaji had begun to speak, he could not proceed. Then Maulana Azad Sobhani tried his best to get the crowd under control, but all in vain. For each one among the hearers felt it his duty to call upon everybody else to keep the peace. The cry of "Shattam podadey, Shattam podadey," (Silence, silence) was on everybody's lips, and so there was a horrible din instead of a calm. Mahatmaji and the Maulana Saheb then left the meeting to catch the train at 5 p.m. \*

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\* Thence the party toured through other parts of South India and then up to Bombay.—Ed.

## CHAPTER VIII

### BEGINNINGS OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

It was Tuesday, the 4th of October, 1921. Leaders from the different provinces had assembled in a meeting at Bombay in response to Mahatmaji's invitation. Mahatmaji had made up his mind to publish a manifesto over the signatures of all these leaders.\* Though it was prepared at such short notice yet its method was so perfect that it was a delight to read it. Mahatmaji was now expecting to get all the leading men of India in a body to commit, regardless of the frowns of the Government, the identical offence for which the Ali Brothers had been arrested. In the draft manifesto it was stated that it was the inherent right of every Indian to express his opinion with full freedom about the propriety or otherwise of citizens offering their services to, or continuing to remain in the employ of, the Government, whether in the civil or the military department. The manifesto then declared that, in the present circumstances of the country, it was wrong not only for Mussalmans, but for every Indian, of whatever persuasion, to serve in the army, or any other administrative department of the Government. And it ended with an appeal to every Government servant to resign his place, and take to the production and propagation of *khaddar* with a view to earn his living.

Since the morning, news had begun to pour in of the arrival of the leaders from the different provinces. The northern contingent was made up of Lala Lajpatrai from the Punjab, Hakim Saheb and Dr. Ansari from Delhi, Pandit Motilalji, Maulana Abdul Bari, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Pandit Jawaharlalji and Shri Mahadev Desai, from the United Provinces; Shri Rajendraprasad from

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\* \* The circumstances under which that manifesto was composed have been described by the author in a previous chapter of the original edition. It has not been included in this abridged version. — ed.

Bihar; and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Shri Shyam-sundar Chakravarty, and Shri Jitendralal Banerji from Bengal. From the South came Shri Rajagopalachariar of Tamil country (Madras Presidency), Shri Venkatappayya of the Andhra country (Madras Presidency); Shri Deshpande of the Karnatak, and Shri Kelkar of Poona, as well as other Maharashtra leaders. Although the meeting was arranged for 3 in the afternoon, still from the morning many of the leaders had been coming to Mahatmaji for consultation, to some of whom Mahatmaji gave copies of his draft manifesto.

Shri Chhotani, the millionaire merchant of Bombay, and the then President of the Khilafat Committee, had just returned from Europe. He called on Mahatmaji with Shri Mushir Hussain Kidwai and Maulana Hasrat Mohani, and was anxious that Mahatmaji should convert his two friends to his (Mahatmaji's) way of thinking. The whole movement was so much love's labour lost,—such was Shri Kidwai's opinion. He had a peculiar roundabout way of expressing himself. By character Maulana Hasrat Mohani seemed to me like a solid mass of moving rock.

It appeared as though those who would come in collision with him were bound to go to pieces under the shock of the impact. His steady look and the metallic ring of his voice, bore witness to the solidity of his character, and the rare quality of holding on to his conviction at all hazards. The Maulana, when he heard Shri Chhotani making his request, said to Mahatmaji, "No, no, I am not opposed to your views; only I do not think that we ought to lay so much stress on *khaddar*. In my view, Indian mill-made cloth is equally Swadeshi."

Maulana Abdul Bari Saheb had come from Lucknow. He looked like a molten ball of iron. His influence over the Mussalman community was unbounded. Seeing Mahatmaji wearing his loin-cloth, which did not reach to his knees, the Maulana said, "We have all to come and see you, but it is against our scripture to keep the knees bare in this fashion", at which Mahatmaji hurriedly covered up his legs with the piece of loose cloth that he

had to cover the upper part of his body, and laughed and said, "Now it is all right, I suppose."

Pandit Jawaharlalji was sitting quietly by the side of Mahatmaji, reading that day's *Bombay Chronicle*. Seeing Mahatmaji mentioned as "Mahatma Gandhi" in an Assam Government communique, he said with a laugh, "This is perhaps the first time that a Government communique calls him a *Mahatma*?"

In the meantime a certain turbaned *sadhu* wearing ochre-dyed clothes had come self-invited to see Mahatmaji, believing himself to have been inspired with a special message for Mahatmaji. Since morning he had been waiting and waiting, unable with all his efforts to catch Mahatmaji's eye, for Mahatmaji was wholly absorbed in consultation with the leaders. Finding his case hopeless, he at last sought the help of Shri Chhotani, who good-natured gentleman that he was, found it perhaps difficult, specially in those days of Hindu-Muslim entente, to disregard a man dressed as a *sadhu*. But Mahatmaji came to his rescue and sternly rebuked the *sadhu*, saying,—"How dare you be so rude as to waste the precious time of Shri Chhotani"? This saved Chhotani Mian. From this incident I could see that Mahatmaji, despite his habitual gentleness of manner, was not the man to put up with any kind of rude or foolish meddlesomeness.

The leaders' conference met at 3 p.m. The original proposal was that it should meet in Mahatmaji's room; but fearing that his room might not be spacious enough, a separate place had been secured by the side of the Chowpaty Road near Shri Shankarlal Banker's residence. It was only about five minutes' walk from Mahatmaji's lodging. A little before the appointed hour, Mahatmaji walked to the place with Shrimati Naidu, and some eight or nine others. I too followed. Seeing Mahatmaji coming to the meeting with his body bare (but for a small bit of cloth round his loins), and holding a bag in his hand, the old Abbas Tyebji Saheb of Baroda burst out laughing and clapping his hands jestingly, said, "See Mahatmaji has turned mad, but not merely that; he

has devised a new way of making others mad also." In response, Mahatmaji also laughed most heartily.

When the meeting began, it fell to me to keep guard at the entrance. It was not a public meeting, and none but those who were well known to us, or had been invited, were to be allowed to enter. Mahatmaji sat in the centre, and on his right were all the Mussalman leaders sitting on their heels in *darbari* fashion. This lent an additional dignity to the scene. The Muslim gentry seem to have preserved intact the customs and traditions of the olden days of Muslim rule; but the Hindus have no recognized convention as to how to sit when assembled in a meeting. Shrimati Naidu, Pandit Motilalji and other Hindu leaders took their seats to the left of Mahatmaji. Mahatmaji first read out the English draft of his manifesto to the audience, and then gave an Urdu translation thereof. Then the discussion began. The Mussalman leaders mostly kept silent; nor did those also who were Mahatmaji's immediate followers in the Non-co-operation movement make any criticisms. I had an impression from what I had read in the Press that Lala Lajpatrai was not much in sympathy with Mahatmaji's views; but here it seemed to me that he had undergone a complete change. But the Maharashtra leaders kept on raising objection after objection almost to every word and line of the draft. The very mention of the spinning wheel, the handloom and *khaddar* raised quite a storm of opposition from them. Shri Vitthalbhai Patel, Shri Kelkar, Shri Jaykar, and Dr. Moonje were the severest of the critics. Shri Rajagopalachari of Madras argued for a while in support of Mahatmaji. His was a keen intellect, and he was very clever in refuting the arguments of his opponents. Lalaji and Motilalji tried to weigh both sides and arrive at a compromise between the contending points of view. This was my first experience of the proceedings of a "committee meeting" of leaders, and I was rather alarmed at the parade of hair-splitting argumentation. Here, for the first time, I came to realize under what difficulties Mahatmaji had to get his work done; and the

discovery pained me. I could very well understand that in ordinary circumstances at a gathering of leading exponents of divergent views, keen debates like this would be quite in their place. But here, Mahatmaji was about to take his plunge and engage in a terrible struggle with the Government. At such a time as this, the sort of debate I witnessed hardly appealed to me. He could, of course, have gained his point by the sheer weight of his majority ; and it was a revelation to me to note with what patience, courtesy and consideration Mahatmaji would listen to the arguments, however subtle, put forward by the other side.

As a result of the discussion, the language of the statement was considerably modified, but the substance remained much the same. There was, however, one important modification. In the original draft those who would leave Government service were asked to turn to the spinning wheel and *khaddar* ; but in the final draft they were advised merely to take to such means of earning their livelihood, as would be consistent with their self-respect. I felt that much of the art and beauty of the original draft was lost in the process of dissection to which it had been subjected. Some time before sunset I had been once to our lodging to bring Mahatmaji his meal. On my return I found that Shri Mahadev Desai had made a fair copy of the revised statement and placed it before Mahatmaji. He first affixed his signature to it ; the other leaders followed ; and it was not till seven that all the signatures had been taken. I was feeling very tired, and so I left the place of the conference and returned to our quarters.

It was 9-30 p.m. when Mahatmaji came back from the conference. I heard that a rumour was circulating that Mahatmaji was going to be arrested that very night on a charge of inciting soldiers and the police to leave Government service ; and that was why he had been discussing matters till that late hour with the leaders, explaining to

them the lines on which, in the event of his arrest, the movement had to be conducted. As I was the only person who passed the night in Mahatmaji's room, Jamnadas told me again and again that I must make sure that Mahatmaji was not taken away secretly, and that if the police did actually turn up, I must not fail to rouse the whole house.

When Mahatmaji returned, he looked very much tired, and instantly laid himself down on his bed. The weather being very warm, he asked me to fan him, but a few minutes after, all on a sudden he exclaimed, "Write." I at once brought pen and paper, and sat down to write. He dictated to me the resolutions that he proposed to bring before the Working Committee. The reference to the spinning wheel, the handloom and *khaddar* had been deleted from the Leaders' Manifesto; but here in the Working Committee's resolution Mahatmaji inserted it. This draft resolution stated that those who would leave the army or the police should, after undergoing a short course of training, be able to earn an honourable living by handspinning and handweaving. Further, it was stated that the *khaddar* propaganda had fallen far short of the Committee's expectations, and that an all-India campaign of civil disobedience was not possible so long as the boycott of foreign cloth had not been completed, and every district and every province had not become self-contained in the matter of *khaddar*-production. Then another resolution stated that there should be a general voluntary *hartal* throughout India on the day of the landing of the Prince of Wales in India. At eleven in the night Shri Jairamdas of Sindh came to see Mahatmaji. Mahatmaji then asked me to resume fanning, while Shri Jairamdas went on writing to Mahatmaji's dictation. When all the draft resolutions of the Working Committee had been taken down, Shri Jairamdas suggested that in view of the rumours of his arrest that very night, Mahatmaji would be well advised to tell the people the manner in which the work of the movement was to

proceed during his absence. Accordingly, Mahatmaji dictated a message under the title "In the Event of My Arrest", which was to be published in the *Bombay Chronicle*. It was 11-40 p.m. when the writing was finished. In the meantime, Shri Mahadev had gone to wire the "Leaders' Manifesto" all over the country, and also deliver a copy to the *Bombay Chronicle* office for publication. It was then midnight, but he had not returned; so Mahatmaji felt a little surprised. Shri Jairamdas wondered if Shri Mahadev had not been arrested on the way with the Manifesto in his hand. After midnight Shri Jairamdas left us, and Mahatmaji also was about to retire. At 12-30 a messenger from the *Bombay Chronicle* office came in. Scarcely had I dismissed him and put out the light and gone to bed when Shri Mahadev returned and knocked at the door. Mahatmaji immediately summoned him, and questioned him in Gujarati on many matters. I could not follow the talk, but I could gather that Shri Mahadev had done his work most creditably, and I quite realized that if he could be always by Mahatmaji's side he would be a great help in every matter.

On the publication of the Manifesto in the *Bombay Chronicle* next morning, a great wave of excitement and enthusiasm passed through the city. The news at once spread among the general body of people that forty of the most distinguished leaders of India had individually taken upon themselves the responsibility of calling upon all Government servants, including the soldiers and police, to resign their posts under Government. Shrimati Sarojini Naidu came in the morning and intimated to Mahatmaji that even the English residents in the city were astonished and alarmed. At the Taj Mahal Hotel, where she had been staying, several European boarders had come and said to her, "What do you mean? Are you really serious?"

At 12 noon the Working Committee met, and all the proposals of Mahatmaji were accepted. The same day almost all the leaders left for their respective provinces.



Mahatmaji enjoined upon them all that their primary duty should be to maintain peace and order in the country and spread *khaddar*. The same day evening (5th October), Mahatmaji also left for his Ashram.

## CHAPTER IX

### HARD AS ADAMANT

A very large crowd had assembled at the Colaba station (Bombay) to see Mahatmaji off. Everybody had his white *khaddar* cap on, yet nobody would care to keep the peace. It was time for the train to start; and yet, owing to the terrible rush and confusion, we could not put our luggage in the train. Jamnadas, who was directing the work, got excited; and shouting at the top of his voice, began to scold the people, but got no hearing. Unable to understand a word of Gujarati, I could only distinguish the single syllable *chhe*, *chhe*, *chhe*, *chhe*, in every mouth. Surrounded by the crowd, it was very difficult for me to get in, but I had my opportunity and slipped into the train. Seeing that no luggage of ours could be carried to the train, Mahatmaji stood at the entrance of his compartment, and so far as I could see gently reproved the crowd for the "tyranny" of their affection. On the instant the noise and hubbub ceased. Then in all hurry we took hold of our luggage and put it in the train, which left within a few seconds.

In the train we were a large party including Shri Rajagopalachari, Shrimati Anasuyabehn and others. Anasuyabehn was in the same compartment with Mahatmaji. When once I happened to be there on some business, she enquired of Mahatmaji about me. In Mahatmaji's reply I could only distinguish the word *Vaishnava*, and I thought that probably Mahatmaji had taken me for a *Vaishnava*.

Returning to my compartment, I took my seat by the side of Shri Rajagopalachari. He began discussing with

me Mahatmaji's article on "Hinduism" in *Young India*. He pointed out to me that Mahatmaji had passed a verdict of severe condemnation on untouchability and yet had set his face against inter-dining and inter-marriage. Shri Rajagopalachari, went on arguing whether these two positions could at all be reconciled with each other. When we reached the Ashram, he questioned Mahatmaji on this very point. Mahatmaji's answer was that as a believer in the law of *karma* he was not in favour of going against the time-honoured rules in regard to marriage, food, etc. prevailing in Hindu society. But he had declared war against untouchability, simply because in the name of untouchability the lowest classes were being subjected to great oppression, and even denied the elementary rights of human beings, which denial constituted, in his opinion, an offence against religion itself.

At Bombay we had had to bid goodbye to Prabhudas. Mahatmaji had directed him to go and work in the Ashram at Wardha \*. I was much pained to notice how downcast he was when we left him. Then, as I was conversing with Shri Rajagopalachari, Jamnadas came from Mahatmaji in an excited mood and said, "My death-warrant is signed." We enquired what the matter was and heard that it was Mahatmaji's intention to send him to Rajkot to do hand-spinning and hand-weaving work there. For Jamnadas it was indeed a cruel stroke of fortune and as good as a death-warrant, since he had to leave Mahatmaji at once. So also at the time Shri Mahadev Desai, Mahatmaji's devoted disciple and associate, was at Allahabad working for the *Independent* newspaper. He could not bear to be away from Mahatmaji for long; but when Mahatmaji had once made up his mind as to where any of his followers should go to work and

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\* In the Central Province where Shri Vinoba had started an Ashram on the lines of the Ashram at Sabarmati with the help of Sheth Jamnalalji.

† Rajkot is in Kathiawad in Gujarat where Mahatmaji had passed his early years and had an ancestral dwelling house.

what that work should be, there was no way of getting him to agree to the contrary. One day after the evening prayers at the Ashram, I noticed that some three or four important persons, all devoted to Mahatmaji, were moving heaven and earth to make him agree to a proposal of theirs; but Mahatmaji was adamant. Then I discovered that, however soft and gentle Mahatmaji might otherwise appear to be, by nature he was very unyielding. After closely listening to all that those gentlemen had to say, Mahatmaji dismissed their case with the laconic answer, "I do not at all understand what you really mean." Various little incidents of this kind impressed upon me the conviction that by no amount of pressure, whether by way of entreaty or inducement, could you expect to exploit him for your purposes.

All this I mention with a view to bring out one vital trait of his character. He was so constituted by nature that by no amount of submissiveness or devotedness of service could you exercise any sort of personal influence on him. The general rule is that people have got to do many things merely because they feel drawn or are dependent upon others in respect of something or other. Thus in the case of some, ties of blood are an important factor which makes them unable to assert themselves; while again there are others who are won over by smooth words and the application of a judicious dose of flattery. But in the case of Mahatmaji, it was clear that the moment he had decided on a course that he considered to be right and proper, he would pursue it to the end, without at all minding whether by so doing he had to act contrary to the wishes and requests and even the ardent desires of his own people engaged in rendering unstinted personal service to him, or of those who were his devoted followers and adherents. Thus he would not allow his intellect or his judgment to be clouded by love or passion getting the better of him. I had heard from his own lips that on one occasion there was a sharp conflict of views between his wife and himself on the question of untouchability, and then he had felt compelled to ask her to

leave the Ashram and live elsewhere to please herself. This single incident is enough to show how stern and unbending Mahatmaji could be where the interests of truth and justice were at stake.

## CHAPTER X

## THE ASHRAM AT SABARMATI

The Gujarat Mail train reaches Ahmedabad at 8 a.m. Beyond Ahmedabad, is the Sabarmati station, whence the Ashram\* is but a mile off. But the Mail train does not stop at Sabarmati; so we had to get down at Ahmedabad, from which the Ashram is some six miles distant.

Ahmedabad is noted for its cotton mills. The ascendancy of machinery in the life of the city is visible everywhere: it has entered, so to say, into its very bone and marrow.

Advancing a little distance from the railway station, we reached the river Sabarmati. Crossing her by a metalled bridge, we reached the other bank, whence runs a road parallel to the river, leading due north to the Sabarmati station. After the traveller has gone some three miles along that road the sight of an open field dotted with a number of newly built houses would suddenly arrest his eye. This is the celebrated Satyagraha Ashram of Sabarmati. It stands on either side of the public road covering a total of a hundred and fifty acres of land. To the east of the Ashram is the Sabarmati river flowing south, and on the other side of the river lies the city of Ahmedabad extending lengthwise from north to south along the river bank. Only a few years ago, Mahatmaji had pitched a small tent here, and laid the foundation of the Ashram, which has since developed into its present dimensions.

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\* A sort of a school or institution of training maintained by Gandhi. — ed.

Further beyond the Ashram, the road runs for another mile till it reaches the Sabarmati station. Close to the station is the Sabarmati gaol, which is one of the principal gaols in the Presidency of Bombay, providing accommodation for some twelve hundred prisoners. The Ashram, the gaol, and the station, — it is these alone that make Sabarmati known to the outside world, it is these three that give distinction to the quiet little village.

I have already said that the Ashram stands partly to the east, and partly to the west, of the public road. At the eastern extremity stands a fairly large cottage facing the river, in which Mahatmaji lives. There is an open verandah in front of the cottage, where Mahatmaji sleeps all the year round. Even in the winter he sleeps there. I have heard from his own lips that he could not have sleep unless he had a sight of the sky when lying on his bed, and that it was a very old practice of his to watch the stars in the depth of the night. On the south of the verandah is Mahatmaji's sitting room, where he sits the whole day doing his work. Besides there are four other rooms in this cottage.

A little to the northwest of Mahatmaji's cottage, on the very edge of the river bank, is a clear open space of ground where every morning, an hour before sunrise, and every evening after sunset, all the inmates of the Ashram — men, women, and children — gather together and chant the sweet name of God, and recite in chorus verses from the *Gita*. There have been occasions when the presence of Mahatmaji and the magnetism of the place combined to make the prayer almost an inspired act. The fast-flowing river in front, and the vast open sky above, with the occasional appearance of the moon casting its silvery beams on the spot, now in early morning, now in the evening, enhance a hundred-fold the intrinsic sweetness and solemnity of the prayer. When Mahatmaji happens to be at the Ashram, he always makes it a point to be present at the prayer-meeting, no matter at what sacrifice of other work.

Besides Mahatmaji's cottage, in the eastern section of the Ashram, there are a number of other cottages which stand at short distances from each other, and are occupied by the other inmates. There are also a hand-weaving department, a spinning department, a cow shed, and extensive agricultural lands, most of which were at the time given over to the cultivation of cotton.

On the western side of the road, a spacious and imposing building, which accommodates the school attached to the Ashram, greets the eye of the traveller. Along with the inauguration of the Non-co-operation movement, Mahatmaji had abolished the system of literary education till then prevailing at the school, as he felt that that was not the time for young men to remain absorbed in acquiring mere book-learning. He wanted everybody to take part in the righteous fight then going on throughout the country. Some should forward the cause by applying their intelligence to its success; some by participating in active work; the boys must contribute their quota by the exercise of their hands and feet, working at the spinning wheel and the handloom. Mahatmaji had in fact laid down specific duties for all, men and women, young and old; and it is precisely because he had succeeded in enlisting the active co-operation of people from the highest to the humblest that his movement had in such short space of time expanded to vast dimensions. The abolition of the literary system of instruction at the Ashram School was followed by a considerable fall in its numerical strength, but Mahatmaji did not mind it at all. For in Mahatmaji's opinion it was no good for scholars to have an education which would not make men of them, which would not build up their moral backbone, and so make them strong enough when called upon to enter the lists on behalf of truth and justice.

To the west of the school building stand Mahatmaji's library, and the boys' dining hall. In the western section of the Ashram there are other structures also but these have all grown up for the most part in close association with the school. For instance, to the north of the school

are four rows of cottages in which about a dozen of the teachers live with their families. Further north and separated from all these is the cottage of Imam Saheb. Imam Saheb is an Arab Mussalman, who was once a trader in South Africa. He was one of Mahatmaji's helpers when Mahatmaji launched his campaign of passive resistance in assertion of the honour and self-respect of Indians in that part of the world. From that time onwards, Imam Saheb has been one of Mahatmaji's companions. And Mahatmaji's principal object in bringing him over to India was to give a practical illustration of his belief that it was possible for Hindus and Muslims to live together in bonds of amity while remaining faithful to their respective creeds.

The eastern and western halves of the Ashram have grown up on the basis of a common ideal. Nevertheless, there are differences of outlook which do not, however, make themselves felt. For these do not interfere with the system of daily work to which all have to conform equally. This common programme of daily work and life has to be understood a little closely, and for this, certain preliminary observations are necessary. The body, the mind and the soul—these three go to make a human being. Ordinarily, however, we see that people who are anxious for mental and moral culture either forget or neglect the needs of the body, and give themselves up wholly to their studies, or to their religious pursuits. In order to steer clear of this error, every inmate of the Ashram is bound to do some form of body-labour or other. Even the teachers here draw water from the wells and carry it in vessels suspended from a pole on the shoulder. Besides, every one has to wash his own clothes, clean his own plates, and do such other physical labour for himself. As soon as the prayer bell rings at four in the early morning, every one has to wake up and prepare to attend the prayers. So, too, when the bell rings in the evening, every inmate must be ready to come and join in the prayers. In respect of all these matters all who belong to the Ashram are bound by common rules of discipline.

But the high ideal of renunciation and self-restraint which Mahatmaji has in a unique measure reached in his own life, and which it has been his endeavour to place before the country at large through the discipline of Ashram life, is one which can hardly be realized in their daily lives by ordinary men and women and especially those who are married and are householders. Truth, non-violence, *brahmacharya* or self-control, the non-possession of wealth except such as is absolutely necessary for self-support, etc. — all these may be accepted as the goal of one's life, but their realization in thought, word and deed in one's own daily life could only be the result of a high degree of self-purification. Mahatmaji himself knows this, and therefore he would not, either directly or indirectly, force any request on anybody to take up those vows through any formal process of imitation or any process indeed which would smack of outward display. As far as I have seen, it is no part of Mahatmaji's system of training to force his views upon others, or to get anybody do a thing merely because he (Mahatmaji) considers the doing of it right and proper. But his one anxiety is to strive untiringly to make his own life grow from more to more in purity and holiness, and he is quite content and happy if people should accept or carry out as much of his teaching as they can in a most natural way and out of their own initiative.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE ASHRAM PRAYER

At four o'clock the sacred hour before sunrise, the Ashram bell rings to rouse the inmates from their sleep. That ringing sound penetrates your ears and awakens your slumbering consciousness. But this call — is it merely a call to you to shake off the slumber of your body, or does it betoken also a call to awaken your slumbering soul ? From every quarter of the Ashram are heard voices of awakened people, and soon with rapid steps they are seen repairing to the place of the prayer meeting, where they all assemble at the proper time. The Dawn is still fast asleep in the lap of Night, her beloved maid of honour, who protects her sleeping Queen from the world's gaze with her thousand flashing eyes. The keen rays of those eyes fill every quarter of the heavens. In front, the sweet murmur of the running river heard like an indistinct sound of music wafted from afar through some unknown region breaks in upon the solemn stillness. On a sudden, blending its harmony with this note of music, is heard the note of prayer uttered in chorus by a hundred throats :

प्रातर्भजामि मनसो वचसामगम्यम्  
वाचो विभ्रान्ति निखिला यदनुग्रहेण ।  
यन्नेति नेति वचनेर्निगमा अबोचुः  
तं देवदेवमजस्रच्युतमाहुरग्र्यम् ॥

(This morning I worship the Great Being who is beyond the reach of mind and speech ; by whose favour the eternal sound receives its primal energy ; to whom the *Vedas* point by the words, 'Not this, Not this' ; who is the Great Lord to whom all gods bow in reverence ; who is the Self-existent (uncreated), Immutable and Primal Being.)

Then follow songs of praise in salutation to the Earth, to Saraswati,<sup>1</sup> to the *Guru*,<sup>2</sup> to Vishnu,<sup>3</sup> and to Siva.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The goddess of learning

<sup>2</sup> The teacher

<sup>3</sup> Indian name of the Deity.

<sup>4</sup> Indian name of the Deity.

Then the devotee places at the Lotus Feet of his Lord the yearnings of his heart in the following terms :

न त्वहं कामये राज्यम् न स्वर्गं ना पुनर्भवम् ।

कामये दुःखतप्तानाम् प्राणिनामार्तिनाशनम् ॥

स्वस्ति प्रजाभ्यः परिपालयन्ताम्

न्यायेन मार्गेण महीं महीशः ।

गोब्राह्मणेभ्यः शुभमस्तु नित्यम्

लोकाः समस्ताः सुखिनो भवन्तु ॥

(I yearn not for earth, nor heaven, nor even freedom from rebirth, but my heart's yearning is to relieve the woes of suffering humanity. May the peoples be happy! May the rulers of the earth following the path of righteousness protect their peoples! May good ever attend the Cows and the Brahmans! May the whole world be happy!)

Lastly the devotees recite in chorus the following hymn of complete self-surrender to the Feet of the Lord :

“ नमस्ते सते ते जगत्कारणाय

नमस्ते चिते सर्वलोकाश्रयाय ।

नमोऽद्वैततत्त्वाय मुक्तिप्रदाय

नमो ब्रह्मणे व्यापिने शाश्वताय ॥

त्वमेकं शरण्यं त्वमेकं वरेण्यम्

त्वमेकं जगत्पालकं स्वप्रकाशम् ॥

त्वमेकं जगत्कर्तृपातृप्रहर्तृ

त्वमेकं परं निश्चलं निर्विकल्पम् ॥

(I bow to Thee, the Creative Energy. I bow to Thee, the Spiritual Energy that sustains the whole Creation. I bow to Thee, the Great Being who sets free all from the fetters of finite life. I bow to Thee, the one all-pervading Reality. I bow to Thee, the Omnipresent, Eternal Truth.)

Thou alone art our fittest refuge; Thou alone, the worthiest to be desired; Thou alone art the Revealer of created existences; Thou alone art Self-Revealed; Thou alone art Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of all existence; Thou alone art beyond all limitation, Immutable, Transcendental.)

After the scriptural part of the prayer is over, the Ashram musician will teach you through his *bhajans*\* : "O man, you are not an isolated unit in this world, standing apart from everything else ; but you are vitally united with the whole. Let it be your endeavour in a living manner to realize this oneness. You will have to purify your life through work and service to the world ; and when your life is purified should you be able to shake off the antagonism born of a separate, selfish existence. For when this antagonism of spirit ceases, then truly do you become one with the whole world. Therefore, the *Shastras*† make a threefold division of action, e.g. *sattvika* (altruistic or other-regarding), *rajasika* (or self-regarding) and *tamasika* (neither selfish nor unselfish but the product of self-delusion). Therefore, try to realize the full significance of this teaching of the *Shastras* ; and while devoting yourself the whole day to work, try to bring the same into conformity with that teaching. No one remains without work even for one single moment ; nor is it possible for him to do so. Work alone would lift you‡ ; and work also may lead you down to hell. The good and the evil of diverse types of action have been explained to you. Let this teaching be imprinted on your mind, and let all your daily work conform to it."

Thus should you begin the day's work at the Ashram. If you have any doubts, you may have them cleared up by the *Acharya*.‡ It is your duty to equip your mind as efficiently as you can, so that you may carry out the day's work with the necessary energy and strength of purpose.

Again at the close of the day's work in the evening, is heard the summons for prayer. You will hear again the sound of the prayer bell enjoining you to leave work. The sun has just sunk below the horizon lighting up the western sky with his crimson rays. The same river bank, the same open sky, and the fresh gentle breeze of evening — all appear to be anxious to co-operate in allaying your

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\* Devotional songs.

† Hindu scriptures.

‡ A religious teacher.

fatigue after a heavy day's work. The joyous, buoyant shouts of Ashram children are heard like the blended notes of birds repairing to their nests. All on a sudden all sounds are hushed, and the loud chanting of a hymn of praise to the Almighty, is heard :

यं ब्रह्माशरणेन्द्ररुद्रमरुतः स्तुन्वन्ति दिव्यैः स्तवैः

वेदैः साङ्गपदक्रमोपनिषदैः गायन्ति यं सामगाः ।

ध्यानावस्थिततद्गतेन मनसा पश्यन्ति यं योगिनः

यस्यान्तं न विदुः सुरासुरगणा देवाय तस्मै नमः ॥

(He who is the Lord of the Universe, in whom all subsist, and without whom nothing can subsist, let all our heart's devotion and love be laid at His Feet. O Lord! to Thee whose praises come forth in celestial strains from the lips of Brahma, Varuna, Indra, Rudra, Marut\* whose glories are sung by the *Upanishads*† through the chanting of the *Sama* hymns; whose presence is realized by the followers of the *yoga* system through transcendent meditation on the Lord, and whose infinitude is beyond the powers of *devas*‡ and *asuras*‡ to realize, — to Thee, O Lord! we bow our heads in adoration.)

After this will be recited in chorus in sweet musical tones some sacred verses from the Scriptures. These will teach you that if you seek to attain peace you will have to control your lust for material enjoyment; you will have to turn the course of your desires inward, so that they may change their character and get spiritualized. In the morning, you were roused to throw yourself wholeheartedly into work, and it was pointed out to you what type of work was truly conducive to your welfare. Now when you have finished your day's labour and are returning for rest, it is necessary to tell you that sleep alone cannot give you rest. For bodily rest is not the only kind of rest. During your day's work, you have had to come under many external influences, and these must have affected your mind in diverse ways. If you can shake them off, and so cleanse your spirit, then indeed will you be able to earn true rest. It is for you to place before

\* Different forms or modes of the Deity.

† Ancient Indian philosophical writings.

‡ Lesser spiritual beings.

yourself the high ideal of an active life in which while engaged in outward work you nevertheless retain your equanimity of mind. You will have to bring under your control the wayward passions and impulses lusting for outward gratification, and steadily develop the power of your inner self. Even as the waters of rivers find their resting place in the great ocean, so also may the passions and impulses be turned away from their courses and made to enter the regions of the spirit within, so that they may be transmuted into spiritual energies. Thus, for him alone is true peace, who has chained and spiritualized those desires of his which are seeking to find an external outlet through self-indulgence. He who lets himself be at the mercy of such outgoing desires and impulses, for him indeed, there is no peace.

It would be simply impossible to have a true insight into the deeper springs of Mahatmaji's activities, slowly struggling towards self-expression in the shape of this Ashram, if we left out of our consideration these morning and evening prayers, devotions and teachings. Mahatmaji's genius for organization and work has captured the imagination of the whole of India and has created a universal awakening. His clarion call has been heard from one end of the country to the other. But if we seek to weigh and measure him merely by this external standard, we shall hardly be able to enter into the secret of his real greatness; we shall hardly be in a position to comprehend those spiritual forces of character which lie at the very root of the external manifestation of Mahatmaji's power and influence.

CHAPTER XII  
FOUNDATIONS OF MAHATMAJI'S  
SPIRITUAL LIFE

Those who will have so far followed with appreciation the morning and evening prayers at the Ashram will be in a position to arrive at some understanding of the foundations of Mahatmaji's religious life. In the prayers there is a double note. First there is the note of emphasis on the doing of *sattvik* or altruistic work. But mere work, however unselfish, — what would it lead to? What, in fact, is the ultimate objective, the spiritual goal, of such purified activities? That is the problem for all true aspirants. Therefore, the prayers contain a second note, pointing out that genuine work looses the chains of matter, and leads ultimately to the emancipation of the spirit from the bondage of matter, i.e. sets the soul free. In that way is emphasized the high spiritual value of purified work as laying the very foundations of a truly religious life.

But the real problem for one who would seek to pursue a religious life is how he may keep his activities free from the taint of impurity. For a man may pursue a course of mere intellectual discussion of religious principles and doctrines, and yet if his thoughts and actions continue to be impure and selfish, the attainment of a religious life, truly so called, must remain a most remote contingency. It is, therefore, of paramount importance not to pursue at haphazard a life of mere strenuous activity, but to so work that your work does not become a source of further bondage. The worker must, indeed, from the beginning, be trained to distinguish between good actions and bad, — trained to understand what sort of activities tend to enmesh him in a life of bondage and misery, and what other sort tend to lift him out of such a life.

Mahatma Gandhi is a hero in the field of work ; of work, that is to say, leading to the goal of such spiritual freedom. However much he might allow himself to get entangled in a thousand and one activities, his spiritual idealism never forsakes him. It is by the power of his spirit that he is able to keep himself free from their disturbing and contaminating influences ; and he would pursue his course with a singleness of purpose, with a rare equanimity, and a unique power of self-conscious strength born of the power of spirit, even if he was left without a single worldly supporter. That is why he was able to lift even political work on to the level of a religious calling. There is nothing in his politics which partakes of pretence, diplomacy, or hypocrisy. His politics does not contemplate the attainment of political freedom with a view to serve the selfish interests of any particular individuals, classes or sects, to help in the growth of their selfish power, prestige or prosperity. The ultimate objective of his political efforts, in fact, is to help forward a spirit of duty and service among Indians towards fellow Indians, irrespective of class or creed. Those who mean by Swaraj the mere winning of political power, that is to say, the wresting from the hands of the English people the reins of government, would find that Mahatmaji would not remain satisfied with the mere winning. For if after such political power had been once wrested by the efforts of any particular class or community, that class or community should become supreme and wield undue power and tyrannize over the general body of the people, Mahatmaji would be the foremost to resist such tyranny and deprive that class or community of its authority. For himself, Mahatmaji has no craving for riches, fame, or power. His heart bleeds at the sight of afflicted, poverty-ridden India. He has harnessed all his energies either to the mending or to the ending of a system of government which has made all this possible. Therefore it is that his actions are so pure, so spiritual, so *sattvika* (altruistic) ; and so for him politics also has become the handmaid of a religious life.

Mahatmaji has accustomed himself to examine every single act of his in the light of its spiritual value, and convert it into a dynamic element of higher life by the power of his spirituality. It is one outstanding merit of his that in the vast majority of cases he hits the right mark, when in judging actions in the light of their spiritual values he has to discriminate between the true and the false, the pure and the impure. To live the life of the world and be bound up with its activities, and yet tread the narrow straight path in the manner indicated is indeed an extremely difficult task. And this is because, on account of our personal likes and dislikes, subtle cravings for enjoyment, and our anxiety to gratify our personal will, our vision of Truth is obscured, and we get bewildered when trying to form a correct judgment on the spiritual value of our activities. This is why aspirants after spiritual perfection, in the early stages, live a life of seclusion from the world. But Mahatmaji, however, does not approve of such a course. When one of his own followers for a limited period of time took to a life of seclusion for purposes of spiritual concentration, Mahatmaji told me that such seclusion was no good. By keeping away from the world, he said, we might indeed escape from the influences or the temptations of the world, but that would be only for a time. Therefore in his opinion, the one thing needful was to wrestle with those influences and temptations, and so gradually build up the power of controlling them. Not till then was our position at all secure ; and so he summed up by saying that we must learn to acquire the power of keeping our heads cool and our minds calm, even in the midst of raging storms in a rough sea.

On another occasion he recited to me the following verses from the *Gita*,\* and said that, as explained therein, he could not understand why it should not be possible to go on praying within, while remaining engaged in external activities.

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\* The Indian scripture entitled the *Bhagavadgita*, or the Lord's Song.



“ नैव किञ्चित् करोमीति युक्तो मन्येत तत्त्ववित् ।

पश्यन् शृण्वन् स्पृशन् जिघ्रन् अश्नन् गच्छन् स्वपन् इवसन् ॥

प्रलपन् विसृजन् गृह्णन् निमिषस्त्रिभिषन्नपि ।

अन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेषु वर्तन्त इति धारयन् ॥”

*Gita*, V. 8-9

(The man who is fixed on his inner self, and understands the truth of things regarding himself as doing nothing, but that only the several organs of sense are engaged in their corresponding activities, as when seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing, talking, throwing, taking, opening his eye-lids or closing them.)

Thus Mahatmaji sets before himself a consistent plan of religious life in which work is transformed into worship; leading onward to greater and greater self-purification, and ultimately to the entire freeing of the soul from the bondage of the self; or in other words, to the attainment of an unending peace. He used to say that we must pursue our work with the energy and velocity of the Punjab Express, but never lose our balance and our capacity to free ourselves from it whenever necessary. In other words, we must preserve our sense of mastery, remaining firm and unmoved, spiritually calm and unaffected. According to him, that is no genuine work where the worker loses his equanimity and gets excited, agitated or disturbed; for he then loses his sense of mastery, and the work loses its spiritual character and becomes a source of bondage and misery. Even in the stormiest days of the Non-co-operation agitation while the political sky was charged with cloud and thunder, Mahatmaji would pursue with perfect self-composure his routine-work of conducting his two weeklies, *Young India* (in English) and *Navajivan* (in Gujarati), filling the whole of them with his own contributions. Then again there was no limit to the number of letters and telegrams that used in those days to pour in from every part of the country, and demanded his immediate attention. In spite of all this, I

have never seen him otherwise than cool and collected. Those who have not seen it with their own eyes could hardly believe that it would be possible for Mahatmaji quietly to sit and get on with his work of writing out articles, etc., when all around thousands of people were roaring, shouting their joyous shouts and crying cries of victory (for Mahatma Gandhi).

That Mahatmaji is a great soul is apparent from what we have seen of the extraordinary qualities of his character. Nevertheless, he has not yet succeeded in sundering the ties of self which bind him down to the body and a finite existence. In other words, he has not yet reached the heights of the Freedom of the Spirit technically known in Hindu Scriptures as *mukti* or freedom from the bondage of matter. He has himself admitted it time and again. One day in the course of a talk at the Ashram, he had expressed himself in the following way: 'When once I should sit down and concentrate my whole self on the attainment of *mukti*, then not till *mukti* was attained should I ever rise from my seat.' From what I have seen of his power of self-concentration, his self-control, and his unique mastery over his body and mind, I can very well believe unreservedly in what he thus declared about his own spiritual capacity. It is not a matter of very uncommon experience to find men who would deny themselves many of their comforts and enjoyments, or who would go so far as to repress with an iron will the imperious cravings of the senses demanding indulgence and gratification. But what is a very common experience about them is that their renunciation would hardly touch their character. Their so-called renunciation instead of making them meek, humble and self-effacing, would on the contrary make them uncommonly haughty, arrogant and self-assertive. Even while renouncing some of their worldly pleasures, they would more than compensate for it by an exaggerated self-pride. Mahatmaji's renunciation is far different from this. My impression about him is that most of the things that hold man in bondage, things internal as well as external, no longer have their hold on him. That to my

mind is the only explanation of one striking fact in his public life. It is that notwithstanding the unquestioned hold which he has established over the hearts of unnumbered millions, notwithstanding the power, prestige, name and fame which he enjoys, and the command of wealth which is his, one could not trace in him the least indication of self-pride, haughtiness or vanity. What all this means in the way of purity and cleansing of life could be properly appreciated only by those who by actual experience know what tremendous wrestling is involved in getting oneself free from the intoxication of name, fame, wealth, power and things of that kind.

#### CHAPTER XIII

#### MAHATMAJI'S RELIGIOUS LIFE

The whole of Mahatmaji's life is indeed one long continued process of victorious self-discipline. It is hard to imagine to what lengths of self-imposed discipline he must have gone in order to bring his body and mind in subjection and make them subservient to his will. I have seen him undergo two long fasts extending over five days each.\* The fasts no doubt induced a great physical weakness; but as for his mind, it remained as strong as ever. The first two days of the fast, Mahatmaji used to say, were spent in some little suffering; but from the third day onward such suffering ceased, and his body enjoyed perfect restfulness; while inwardly his experience was that of an unalloyed, uninterrupted state of peace. Even while fasting, the usual programme of writing for the two weeklies, or indeed of any of his other duties, e.g., spinning, etc., would continue to be done with the utmost regularity and without the slightest break in any particular. Though married, he had been leading a life of *brahmacharya* or celibacy for many years past. Again, by controlling his palate he has accustomed himself to giving his body only

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\* Those were during the period of seven months (1921-22) covered by this book.

such kind and only so much of nourishment as is necessary for its support and maintenance. For seven months on end, I have seen Mahatmaji subsisting on three meals a day (morning, noon and evening), each meal consisting of sixteen ounces of goat's milk, three slices of toast or an equivalent quantity of flour *bhakari*,\* a score of grapes or raisins, and a couple of oranges.

I have heard that before the days of Non-co-operation, Mahatmaji used to spend two hours every morning grinding wheat into meal. He was weak of body, yet he was able to do so much physical labour, merely because he was so strong in will. Till quite recently, he used to travel only third class. At that period of his life he had to suffer much insult and ill-treatment at the hands of fellow-passengers. Sometimes he would be taken as a cowherd and treated as such; sometimes he would be mistaken for a *Jat*, i.e. an ordinary cultivator, and turned out of his seat. But he would submit to all this insult and hardship without disclosing his identity. One day a member of the Ashram said to me casually, "You, friends, are now travelling in the company of Bapuji † quite comfortably indeed. But there were days when he would carry his own luggage on his head, and walk any distance from the station to reach his destination." That, of course, is now impossible, for Mahatmaji has to give every moment of his time to the work of the nation. But truth to say, Mahatmaji would make no distinction between the old style of travelling and the present. Rather, if the question were put to him, he would perhaps tell you that in the old days he enjoyed his freedom of movement; but now travelling second class or by motor according to prescribed programme was not a little irksome.

This is by no means a display of false humility, or an outward affectation of dislike for material pleasures and comforts. I do not think that anything could ever come from Mahatmaji which he did not truly believe in. From

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\* *Bhakari* is a kind of Gujarati bread.

† The affectionate name for Gandhi used by his close followers. It is the equivalent of papa or daddy, — ed.

my seven months' almost uninterrupted association with him, I have come to believe that it is not possible for him to cherish any falsehood even in his dreams. But the question may very well be asked, 'How is it possible that Mahatmaji should suffer pain because he has to use things which are conducive to bodily comfort, and which, because they are pleasurable, are coveted by people at large?' To elucidate this point it would be necessary for me to show how in all the important matters of his life and activities, in his habits and manners, he differs from the vast majority and has chalked out an independent course for himself.

Thus, arriving at the Ashram, it did not take me long to notice that although he was its founder and presiding deity, he lived there as if he was no better than a guest; all his authority had been relegated to other hands. So if anybody came to him with a petition in connection with Ashram matters, he would reply that he was there as a guest, and it was not for him to exercise any authority or grant any prayer. Though born in a middle-class family, he had not kept any property for himself. The expenses of the Ashram were being defrayed by a number of friends. So many books or writings of his were being sold in the market, and yet he would not exercise his right of proprietorship, nor would he take anything from publishers in exercise of such right. In furtherance of Indian National Congress work, Mahatmaji had to undertake tours from one end of the country to the other; and yet he would not take a farthing from the All-India Tilak Swaraj Fund\* to defray his tour expenses. Towards keeping riches for personal use or enjoyment, his attitude was practically one of complete indifference or detachment. When Mahatmaji would return from a tour to the Ashram, common people from the town or from the surrounding villages would come in throngs to have his *darshan*,† and would offer him not only fruits and flowers as an act of

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\* A fund for promoting Indian Self-government Movement, named after a former Indian patriot named Tilak.

† A sight of him. It is the belief of Indian peasants that the mere sight of a saint is a blessing.

homage, but also coins of various amounts. That was a decent source of income to the Ashram, for the daily collections went up to a high figure. But, after a time, finding that his work was suffering on this account, he directed that the offer of such presents should be prohibited.

Mahatmaji, as is well known, has not renounced family and turned an ascetic; he has throughout lived his life as a householder with his wife and children. But even here there is something characteristic of the man. Thus while Mahatmaji has never been found wanting in promoting all that is conducive to their true welfare, still he could never bring himself down to the level of an ordinary man of the world whose one thought is how to serve the material interests of his family. I could never detect any the least discrimination made by him in his treatment of the members of his own family as against those who did not belong to it. Rather, if anything, it had appeared to me that he showed a greater consideration towards his associates and followers. It is this equal attitude and equal treatment towards all that has earned for Mahatmaji the honoured title of *Bapu* or Father. In Gujarat he is best known by the name *Bapu*. Thus the right which his sons claim when they call him "Bapu" is no monopoly of theirs, but is equally shared with them by the general public. All this becomes apparent when one has lived with him for some little time. Then it does not take long to discover that those who in the first instance sought to approach him on terms of equality would begin to address him as "Bapuji" not very long after.

What ordinarily happens is that people take kindly to those who would speak well of them, and are repelled by those who would speak ill. But in the case of Mahatmaji, I had so far observed a complete reversal of this rule. No panegyrist could ever hope to ingratiate himself with him. A certain gentleman from Madras had written a book with the title, *The Gospel of Gandhi*. When Mahatmaji saw that the word *gospel* was used as the title, he felt pained beyond measure. He told me that

the use of the word with reference to his teachings was a direct insult to religion itself. On another occasion, a certain article from a British newspaper \* containing eulogies of Mahatmaji had come to be reprinted in *Young India*. Mahatmaji was then on tour, and he came to notice it only after the particular issue was out. This publication disturbed and distressed him beyond words. When one attains to a position of power and pre-eminence among his fellows, the usual rule is that a certain section of his countrymen would begin to speak in high praise of him, while another section would find fault with him. In the case of Mahatmaji also, I noticed the same thing. Everyday he used to receive many letters. There were some among these which would shower encomiums upon him, while others would have no words too strong to express their disapproval or condemnation of him. Sometimes I would read out to him one or two letters containing his eulogies and I found that eulogy gave him no pleasure, but left him rather wan and dejected. But on the contrary, whenever any criticism or condemnation was read out to him, he would listen to every word with rapt attention, anxious to discover how much or how little of truth there might be in it. In the days of the Bombay riots,† Mahatmaji was inundated with letters from the Parsis of Bombay, both men and women, containing the foulest abuse of him. I read out every one of these letters to him; but I saw that such abuse made not the least impression on him, for he remained as calm as ever. To be attacked in this foul manner, and yet to remain wholly unaffected by it,—such self-control appeared to me at the time as something quite exceptional.

One thing that struck me as equally extraordinary was that those who opposed him received at his hands a measure of consideration, honour and affectionate solicitude which he would not ordinarily extend even to the

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\* *The Glasgow Herald*.

† On the occasion of the arrival of the Prince of Wales, who landed at Bombay on November 17, 1921.

most devoted of his followers. Any eulogy pronounced on him or his qualifications or virtues would leave him cold and indifferent, and that is all the gain which the panegyrist could expect at his hands for all his pains. Now it may well be granted that Mahatmaji's best wishes were unremittingly showered upon his devoted followers, which went a great deal to purify and ennoble their lives. Nevertheless from all that I have seen, my feeling is that as between opponents and friends, his love and tenderness were reserved more for the former than for the latter.

For the humiliated and the oppressed, Mahatmaji's sympathy is deep and unstinted ; and nowhere else could they expect anything like it. Mahatmaji's heart instinctively goes out to the person who has incurred everybody's displeasure. On one occasion, for some reason or other, many inmates of the Ashram were averse to accord consideration and attention to a certain person, whose ways and manners had become the subject of criticism in Ashram circles. Mahatmaji also disapproved of the conduct of that person. But from the day that he came to discover that the Ashram inmates had become unkind, from that day onwards he made it a point, in spite of a thousand and one pressing duties, everyday to go and visit the person in question, who was soon reinstated in public favour. Mahatmaji's psychology in matters like this is worth noting. Whenever he sees anybody under him behave untruthfully or do anything dishonestly, Mahatmaji's practice invariably is to examine himself in the first instance, to see wherein he himself might have erred. He holds that unless there was some wrong or untruthfulness lurking in his own character, people working in intimate touch with him could not be guilty of such wrong conduct. My honest belief as the result of my association with him at close quarters is that Mahatmaji's life is so transparent, clear, and pure that he has hardly anything to hide from the public view.



## CHAPTER XIV

### MAHATMAJI'S SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

How exactly Mahatmaji could have been able to attain this lofty standard of purity and unaffected simplicity ; by pursuing what definite spiritual processes could he have succeeded in purging himself to such an extraordinary extent of the impurities and imperfections of ordinary human nature—is a question which occurs naturally to most aspirants after higher life. But here I am unable to posit anything definite, for although I have lived with Mahatmaji uninterruptedly for seven long months night and day, I do not pretend to have any special knowledge of his life's inner discipline except of course what could be gleaned from the outside. For Mahatmaji was not given to discussing matters of such discipline. That side, the inner religious side of his life, he seemed to be anxious to veil from public view as much as possible. Such at any rate is my conviction, judging from all that I have seen of him. But there is one thing about him which is most clear to me. It is that he has an undying faith in truth and the pursuit of truth as a spiritual force ; and that for the sake of truth there is nothing which Mahatmaji cannot give up. I have been led from this to hold that Mahatmaji's spiritual cleansing has followed as a natural effect, — the effect, namely, of the light of truth constantly beating upon him and transmuting his life and character.

Born of a Vaishnava \* family, the instincts of a Vaishnava are bred in his bones. His childhood and boyhood having been passed in Gujarat where the teachings of Jainism ‡ hold sway over the minds of the people, he must have in no small measure come under the influence

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\* An Indian sect who worships especially the god Vishnu.

‡ An Indian sect whose beliefs in some respects resemble those of Buddhism.

of such teachings in the most impressionable period of his life. During his stay in England and in South Africa, he came in contact with many religiously-minded Christians, and under their influence studied the Bible and the teachings of Jesus Christ with profound respect. He has also associated with many devout Mussalmans. Further he has a wonderful power of disentangling and seizing on the vital truths of every religion which has saved him from falling into the snares of sectarian ideas and the narrowness of sectarian feelings. In these days a copy of the *Gita* is always to be found with him, and the *Gita* has become his guide, friend and philosopher. It is like a necklace which he wears round his neck. He is an England-returned barrister, and yet in many ways his habits and manners are those of a devout Hindu.

Along with a copy of the *Gita*, Mahatmaji used to keep in his *khaddar* bag a rosary of *rudraksha* beads. But I had never seen him using it. During the critical days of the Non-co-operation movement, on two mornings going to remove his bedding, I found the rosary lying near his pillow, and I thought that he must have used it overnight. Again, in September (1921), when he met Shri Mukerji in Calcutta, Mahatmaji told him that when reciting God's name he used his rosary and it was shown by him to Shri Mukerji; but that by actual experience he had found that if he went on taking God's name while turning the spinning wheel, that did him greater good than telling the beads; and that he had come to believe that if people took to the wheel as a religious discipline their minds would naturally turn towards God. Writing on the "moral aspect" of hand-spinning in India in his *Young India*, Mahatmaji has given expression to the very same sentiments. Thus we find him writing as follows: "And I verily believe that when millions take to it (the spinning wheel) as a *sacrament*, it will turn our faces godward." \*

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\* *Vide Young India* for September 22, 1921, article "Wanted Experts". The full paragraph containing the above lines may be given here: "It (hand-spinning) will save our women from forced violation of their purity. It will, as it must, do away with begging

I know nothing in detail of the manner of his praying ; but I have oftentimes seen him working away at the wheel with deep, one-pointed attention ; and the thought had come to me many a time that Mahatmaji probably practised the *ajapa* § mode of prayer. But whence or how he had learnt that system of prayer is more than I can say.

I have placed before the reader just so much of the religious side of Mahatmaji's life as has directly come under my personal observation, or as I have been able to comprehend. Various attempts are being made by various people to probe and estimate from various points of view his all-sided greatness, and thus to arrive at an integral view of his distinctive personality. But I hold that it would never be possible to arrive at a synthetic understanding of Mahatmaji's character, so long as there is no deeper understanding and appreciation of the religious side of his life — that side which is ever welling up from both within him and without ; — 'within him' in his pure, ennobling, self-effacing thoughts ; and 'without' in the shape of his daily disinterested acts and activities. Mahatmaji is very fond of a certain hymn composed by the great poet-saint of Gujarat, Narasinha. Very frequently at prayer-time, this hymn would be sung to him. When Mahatmaji was going to bid farewell to his beloved Ashram after his arrest,\* it was the same hymn that he asked those that were there to sing to him. It would seem that Mahatmaji's whole soul breathes out through that hymn. It paints so fully the whole cast of his mind and the deepest longings of his spirit that I must give below the full text of the Gujarati original together with an English translation :

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as a means of livelihood. It will remove our enforced idleness. It will steady the mind. And I verily believe that when millions take to it as a sacrament, it will turn our faces godward. This is the moral aspect of spinning."

§ *Japa* is the silent recitation of God's name along with the telling of the beads. The *ajapa* system is the silent recitation of God's name following the natural course of respiration.

\* 10th March, 1922 (10-30 p.m.)

“वैष्णव जन, तो तेने कहीअे, जे पीड पराजी जाणें रे ।  
 परदुःखे अुपकार करे तोये, मन अभिमान न आणें रे ॥  
 सकल लोकमां सहुने बंदे, निंदा न करे केनी रे ।  
 वाच काछ मन निश्चळ राखे, धन धन जननी तेनी रे ॥  
 समदृष्टि ने तृष्णा त्यागी, परस्त्री जेने मात रे ।  
 जिह्वा थकि असत्य न बोले, परघन नव झाले हाथ रे ॥  
 मोह माया व्यापे नहि जेने, दूड बैराग्य जेना मनमां रे ॥  
 रामनामशुं ताळी लागी, सकल तीरथ तेना तनमां रे ॥  
 वणलोभी ने कपटरहित छे, काम क्रोध, निवार्या रे ।  
 भणें नरसंयो तेनुं वरसन करतां, कुळ अेकोतेर तार्या रे ॥”

(“He is the true Vaishnava who knows and feels another's woes as his own. Ever ready to serve, he never boasts.

“He bows to every one, and despises no one, keeping his thought, word and deed pure. Blessed is the mother of such a one.

“He looks upon all with an equal eye. He has got rid of his lust. He reveres every woman as his mother. His tongue would fail him if he attempted to utter an untruth. He covets not another's wealth. The bonds of earthly attachment hold him not. His mind is deeply rooted in detachment (renunciation). Every moment he is intent on reciting the name of Rama \* (God). All the holy places are ever present in his body.

“He has conquered greed, hypocrisy, passion and anger. A sight of such a Vaishnava, says Narasaiyo, saves a family through seventy-one generations.)

It will be seen that this celebrated hymn of Narasinha praises the name of Rama. Once also when Mahatmaji after a whole day's work and fast was feeling thoroughly exhausted, I heard him heaving a heavy sigh and taking the name of the Lord thus — “Shree Rama, Shree Rama”. Further having regard to the reverential manner in which he speaks of Tulsidasa's *Ramayana* and listens to hymns in praise of Rama, I have come definitely to believe that he recites the name of Rama as an act of divine worship.

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\* An incarnation of God whose praises are sung in the *Ramayana*.

## CHAPTER XV

### MAHATMAJI'S FAMILY

Just as every one in the Ashram calls Mahatmaji by the honoured name of "Bapu" (Father), so also his wife is known as "Ba". "Ba" in Gujarati means "Mother". As wife of Mahatma Gandhi her life has been one of severe testing. Her husband is recognized as the greatest man in the world living, and accorded royal honours by the people of this country. Therefore on her has devolved the responsibility appertaining to the position of the mother of 33 crores of India's children. While she is no doubt the partner of her exalted husband's fame and glory, none of the pleasures and comforts of the world have been hers. For she shares with her husband a life of sacrifice and service; and in her devotion to the cause of the country and the general public, she follows in the steps of her great husband. Never has she stood in the way of her husband in his pursuit of a higher life, and whenever or in whatever way it had become necessary for her to come to his assistance, that assistance she had extended to him by thought, word and deed. Thus shall she find an honoured place on the roll of India's great women noted for their virtues and devotion to their husbands, and India will not willingly let her memory die.

It is no easy matter to share with Mahatmaji his keen judgment of things; and "Ba" has been hard put to it on occasions to conform to Mahatmaji's high standard of such judgment. On one occasion a certain inmate of the Ashram was unwell but "Ba" had not kept herself informed of it. So Mahatmaji felt it necessary to point out to her her lapse, and he did it at the prayer-meeting in the presence of all. "If Devadas \* had fallen ill, you would have known

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\* Devadas is Mahatmaji's youngest son.

of it long ago ; but how is it that you do not keep yourself informed when others fall ill ? ” And on another day he said to me, “ I have from the first so trained ‘ Ba ’ that she never shrinks from any kind of work even down to the cleansing of water-closets. But when she feels thoroughly worn out by hard work, she, poor thing, neither grumbles nor protests, but simply weeps.”

Mahatmaji's kitchen at the Ashram is known, as the “ Big Kitchen ”. When he would be staying at the Ashram, he would have every day many guests who would be served from the “ Big Kitchen ”. Whenever friends or acquaintances came to see Mahatmaji, he would make it a point to invite them to be his guests, and it became Ba's duty to prepare food with her own hands for all the guests, morning and afternoon.† When this went on for some length of time her health would visibly suffer and she would look a shrivelled figure. On the other hand, I have often seen that when Mahatmaji stayed away from the Ashram and she got some respite, her strength would return and she would look as fresh as ever. Thus I observed that in her daily life and activities, she followed her great husband's ways by cultivating habits of indifference to or disregard of worldly pleasures and comforts. Here therefore is a shining example of wifely devotion and service to the husband, which “ Ba ” is leaving behind her for all Indian women to follow.

Of the four sons of Mahatmaji, only the youngest, Devadas, was, at the time I am speaking of, living at the Ashram. During our stay at Madras, Mahatmaji had casually mentioned to someone that after his return to the Ashram, he would have only Devadas and me by his side to serve him. That was the reason, I now saw, why Prabhudas had been told off to Wardha and Jamnadas to Rajkot, for other work. With those two I had become very intimate : but I had now got to cultivate the acquaintance of Devadas. I was feeling a little uneasy at the prospect, but Prabhudas assured me that Devadas was so

† The practice at the Ashram is to finish the evening meal before sundown.

tender-hearted and obliging that it was no trouble to be friends with him.

I saw Devadas for the first time at the Ahmedabad station. Through the exuberance of his spirits, he was humming a tune, while he was also getting our luggage put in the motor lorry. We drove to the Ashram in that lorry, and on the way, commenting on the speech of a certain well-known political leader, I heard him stigmatize it as mere "rigmarole". His vivacity, natural to a young man in the vigour of health, his keen intelligence, and his fine conversational powers cast a spell over me. Brought up and trained by Mahatmaji himself as a boy, Devadas had imbibed many of his father's qualities. Devadas's courtesy, and his readiness to oblige others, his fearless courage, and his cheerful and calm exterior seemed to me to be quite exceptional. Mahatmaji himself had once remarked to me, "There is not an iota of fear in Devadas's composition. Where other people should think thrice before venturing at any place, Devadas without the least hesitation would go and enter there." By slow, imperceptible degrees, unknown even to Devadas himself, Mahatmaji had been trying to develop Devadas's character, and make him imbibe the high moral principles and ideals for which the Ashram stands. And it did not take me long to see that as Devadas grew in years, he would acquire such knowledge, experience and maturity of judgment as would make him fit to play an important part as one of Mahatmaji's most efficient instruments.

I must now tell something of several young men, ardent lovers of their country, who, though not Mahatmaji's own sons, still formed a brotherhood with Mahatmaji's children and like them had their meals in Mahatmaji's "Big Kitchen". While Devadas was remarkable for the charm of his conversation and for the ease with which he could make friends with others, there was Chhotalalji, the quiet strenuous worker, who represented just the opposite type of character. You might ply him as much as you liked with questions; but you would hardly get out of him an answer. His reserve and habit of silent

work were such that his very presence at the Ashram could hardly be noticed. But just as the silent working of the 'life-breath' would keep the body functioning, so also Chhotalal's unremitting — albeit silent — supervision of Ashram life and his unobtrusive efforts to maintain Ashram discipline acted even like the vital breath for the body politic of the Ashram, and preserved its life and individuality. Mahatmaji was wont to say, "Chhotalal is a *sipahi*," i.e. a soldier. In truth, the only thing that attracted Chhotalalji was his own duties; for everything else he had supreme indifference — so much so, indeed, that if the world were to go to pieces, Chhotalalji would not forget to be present at the post of duty at the appointed hour, as though nothing was the matter.

Surendraji, again, was a different type of character. He had not the gifts of Chhotalalji, but he would capture you by his charm of manner, his courtesy, his gentlemanliness, and his passion for philosophic discussion. He had an ever-beaming countenance and was ever ready to serve his friends. But even so, his passion for the acquisition of philosophic lore was so strong in him that, under no circumstances could he restrain himself from indulging in it. Therefore, there was no end to his questionings; and he found it hard, indeed, at times to give himself heart and soul, and in a spirit of austere devotion, to any prescribed duty. Nevertheless, his extraordinary power of ingratiating himself with others and making friends of them, had stood him in good stead indeed, for he had, at such an early age as his, acquired a working knowledge of Urdu, Marathi, Gujarati, etc., besides a mastery of his own vernacular, Hindi.

Then, there was a third young man by name Pyarelalji. Judged from the outside he looked as grave and reserved as Chhotalalji. But Pyarelalji would let himself go if only you could strike a responsive chord in his heart, e.g., by starting a discussion on some high topic of intellectual interest. Pyarelalji had received his higher English education at the Punjab University of which he was a graduate. Mahatmaji would speak of him as a



"scholar" when introducing him to others. When Mahatmaji had to look up his own writings or speeches, he would specially depute Pyarelalji. Mahatmaji was wont to remark that Pyarelal was a veritable "encyclopaedia" of all his published writings and speeches.

The youngest of these "spiritual sons" of Mahatmaji was Balakrishna, more familiarly known as 'Balkoba'. An artist by temperament, Balkoba lived to drown himself in the delights of music. When he would sing, the sweetness and softness of his voice would charm every hearer. You see Balakrishna, and you are at once reminded of the *brahmachari* youths of old living in hermitages with their *rishi* parents in forest glades. As befitting a true artist, his nature yet retained its original innocence and simplicity. Nor was there anything to show that Balkoba was in danger of losing his unsophisticatedness with the growth of years, as ordinarily happened to youthful people.

There is not the least doubt that Mahatmaji was ever watchful of the good of every member of his household—his wife, his sons, and those others who were intimately associated with him. Nevertheless, I noticed that for Manu, his five-year old grand-daughter, and for Lakshmi, his seven-year old foster-daughter, his feelings were of the tenderest; and it seemed to me that with them he had a real bond of union. The imperturbable gravity of Mahatmaji's demeanour led me on occasions to think that nothing on earth could relax him, and that he stood like a rock, calm and immovable. But even when Mahatmaji was in his mood of high-strung severity, Manu and Lakshmi would come and engage him, and his features would relax and he no longer retained his unbending manner.

Lakshmi comes of a family of untouchables, and her story, connected as it is with the problem of untouchability on whose solution Mahatmaji has set his whole heart, has naturally acquired a special prominence throughout the country. She has her parents still alive,

and still Mahatmaji has been bringing her up as his foster-daughter. The advent of the untouchable girl in Mahatmaji's family as a member was too much of a shock to the domestic circle, and for a time it created a spirit of revolt against him. But Mahatmaji was quite prepared to renounce family, kindred, and all for the sake of the untouchable girl. He looked at her as, for him, the representative of the untouchable population of India. Mahatmaji therefore felt that his attitude towards Lakshmi, and his treatment of her, must serve to all as an object-lesson of his close identification and sympathy with the down-trodden race of untouchables in India.

The reader must be aware of the views expressed by Mahatmaji on this very subject at Tinnevely to a leader of the untouchable community. Then again, the reader might remember that when he returned to the Ashram after his All-India tour, and Shri Rajagopalachari had put him the very same question, Mahatmaji had similarly expressed himself against interference with the existing social rules regarding inter-caste dining and inter-caste marriages. At Delhi, a little before the time we are speaking of, an inter-caste dinner had been held with great eclat through the initiative of a Depressed Classes Mission, and under the auspices of the Arya Samaj. In reference to this, when letters from orthodox Hindus began to pour in, I thought it my duty to place the matter before Mahatmaji and I found that he was grieved and disappointed that people should have come to believe that he had identified himself with the movement in favour of inter-dining and inter-marriage. He said to me, "If people should persist in distorting my views in the manner they are doing, I am helpless." Then, later on at the time of the Ahmedabad Congress, a similar inter-caste dinner was held; and when letters of protest from representatives of the Hindu community from different parts of the country began to reach him, I had again to place the matter before him. His reply was that neither had he been consulted about the dinner nor had he attended it. But he also told me that his information was that at the

dinner only food<sup>\*</sup> fried in *ghee* was served which, according to Gujarati custom, was not objectionable.

I have observed that rules regarding eating, etc., such as obtain among the more orthodox Hindus, are not strictly followed at the Ashram. But whether they are in consonance with local customs prevailing in Gujarat, or whether they are at variance, and if so, to what extent, I am not in a position definitely to say. I have, however, marked that Mahatmaji is in agreement with the strictly orthodox class of Hindus in commending the system of "self-cooking", i.e. eating food cooked by one's own hands as being superior to eating food cooked by other's hands. Therefore when any of the Ashram inmates had to stay away from the Ashram on some business or other, Mahatmaji would have them cook their own food. But at the Ashram itself, since all had to submit to a common code of conduct and follow a common ideal, Mahatmaji thought that that rule might, without detriment, be kept in abeyance. In the matter of his own food, I have observed him following the orthodox rule of *uchchhishta*.\* He accepts the scriptural rule about the purity of your food as an aid to the purity of your mind. But he holds equally strongly that if your object be not spiritual, if your object be not to keep the mind pure, but on the contrary, if the object is merely the assertion of your superiority (in point of birth) as against the lower-born castes, then the observance of restrictions in the matter of food and drink, however much it might wear an air of religious authority, is irreligious to the core. On the other hand, Mahatmaji holds with the whole strength of his heart that the ideal of self-restraint and self-discipline, which is at the foundation of the whole of the Hindu system, must be maintained at all costs. Therefore, if anything happened to loosen its hold on the Hindu mind.

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\* The rule is that you must not eat the leavings or the remains of another's meal, that is to say,—any food, which has partly been partaken of by another; nor any food which has come in contact with such food. From this it follows that you cannot eat off a common plate with others.

## THE FIRST THREE DAYS AT THE ASHRAM

there would be nobody, I imagine, who would feel the situation so acutely as Mahatmaji. Therefore, holding as Mahatmaji does, that the system of self-restraint and self-discipline which forms the corner-stone of the Hindu social structure must be kept unimpaired and undiminished, — he has never cherished any thought of destroying the system of the four-fold caste. Nor has he for the very same reason supported inter-caste dinners and inter-caste marriages as appropriate measures of social reform.

### CHAPTER XVI

## THE FIRST THREE DAYS AT THE ASHRAM

The best part of the last two months had been spent in the company of Mahatmaji in railway trains in travelling, or making halts, now at one city, now at another, then at a third, and so on in rapid succession. Now having arrived at the Ashram and breathing its larger air I began to feel how very narrowing and cramping had been the influence of that life in trains on my spirits. Here I felt the invigorating breath of life, and my spirits revived. On all sides stretching into the far distance was a vast, open plain, and the soft breeze unpolluted by the dirt and filth of the city, acted, like a balm. Even like a long imprisoned bird just released, I began to breathe more freely and gave myself up to the joys of my new-found liberty. The moment I set foot in the Ashram, dear friend Surendraji came and welcomed me and took me to his room, and assumed the role of my guardian, ministering to my personal wants and comforts. After having obtained from him an idea of the things and objects in the Ashram worth seeing, I was wandering about, when I came upon Mahatmaji returning from his bath. On seeing me he asked in Hindi how I liked the Ashram, to which I replied, "*Jagah bahut achha hai*" (the place is very good, indeed). He was very glad to hear this, and emphasized my view by saying, "*Bahut achhi jagah hai*", with a special stress on *bahut* (very), and then left. I then understood that I

had murdered Hindi grammar by using *achha* (masculine) instead of *achhi* (feminine) before *jagah* (place).

On the day we arrived (6th October), the Ashram prayer-meeting was held with great eclat. Besides the usual congregation consisting of the inmates of the Ashram, there was a large gathering of people from the city itself (Ahmedabad), who had come to join in that day's prayers. At the conclusion of the prayer-meeting a report was read out of the amount of yarn spun and cloth woven by the inmates in the course of their day's work. Mahatmaji followed the report with close attention. Then he discoursed in Gujarati at considerable length on the spinning wheel and the handloom, and finished by explaining at some length how the work of the movement was to be carried on in the event of his arrest. To all this the audience listened with eager and breathless attention.

The evening was a little too advanced and a fall of darkness was hanging round when the prayer assembly dispersed. Mahatmaji returned to his room from the prayer, but sallied out again for a ramble with a bamboo stick about three cubits long in his hand. He was walking fast, and the night was dark; so Devadas followed him with hurried steps with a lantern in hand. I was observing that there had been a greater air of cheerfulness about Mahatmaji since his return to the Ashram.

None has any definite duties to do at the Ashram after the evening prayer. Everybody has to eat his last meal before the sun goes down and then join the prayer. Seeing that Mahatmaji had left for his stroll, I repaired to Surendraji's cottage for the night. The bell again rang out at four in the early morning, and the inmates assembled again at the prayer meeting and began chanting in chorus the hymns. When this was over, Mahatmaji spoke a few words of exhortation on the need for cultivating a spirit of loneliness for purposes of self-realization. He explained that such loneliness could not be had merely by retiring into forest glades. But if we could detach ourselves in spirit from worldly attractions, then indeed could we hope to feel and realize a real loneliness, even though

we might be living and moving among men. Not being able to understand Gujarati well enough, I tried as best I could to follow the trend of Mahatmaji's teachings with such intelligent insight as I was capable of. I was beginning to feel how very inconvenient it was to have thus to depend upon my unaided powers.

It was quite a task to keep Mahatmaji's records, correspondence and other papers so arranged that there should be no difficulty in finding them whenever wanted. Jamnadas having left for Rajkot, I wanted to know definitely about my duties, and so in the morning of the 7th October, I approached Mahatmaji for instructions. He said, "I will first speak to Devadas, and then divide the work between you two." On the second day, there arrived guests at the Ashram, Shri Stokes from Bombay, Shri Jairamdas of Sindh, and Shri Ramachandra Rao of the Andhra country, and some others. The skill and promptitude with which Devadas discharged the duties of hospitality simply charmed me. Shri Rao had a question to put. He said to Mahatmaji, 'In the *Gita*, Shri Krishna enjoined Arjuna to go and fight with his opponents, while you are preaching a non-violent fight. Is there a way of reconciling these two attitudes?' Mahatmaji simply said "This is a question often put to me, and I have answered it many a time. Devadas will tell you all about it. He knows." After a short while, however, he himself explained the matter briefly thus: "The *Gita* is really a philosophical work. Deep down in man's nature is a war going on; it is the higher and the lower in man perpetually battling for mastery. The *Gita* only gives, in the form of a story, the exhortation of the Universal Soul (*Paramatman*) to the Individual Soul (*Jivatman*) to fight and destroy the lower life and thus to establish the ascendancy of the higher or the spiritual element; to assert the supremacy of the soul-life of man." On another occasion, some other person put to him a similar question as follows: "You consider it a sin to kill, but it was Guru Govindsingh, the tenth Sikh Guru, who organized the Sikhs into a community for merely fighting purposes. If

so, can it be said that the tenth Guru put a premium on *adharma* or irreligion?" Mahatmaji answered thus: "The privilege which rightly belongs to a highly developed soul like Guru Govindsingh must not be claimed by us, ordinary mortals. If we must follow in his steps, we must in the first instance seek to realize his high level of spirituality." What I understood from Mahatmaji's brief answer was as follows:

In Mahatmaji's opinion ordinary men and women, standing as they do on the lower levels of spirituality, must in every single act of theirs try to discriminate between the rightness and the wrongness of that act, and then eschew the wrongful act. Otherwise by the doing of sinful acts, the inner life of man would grow more and more impure; while at the same time the results of such impurity would be seen in pain and suffering. When, however, the heart of any spiritual aspirant gets thoroughly purified of evil, the power of evil no longer holds him in bondage. Therefore the taint of evil having gone out of him, he is incapable of harbouring any evil thought or feeling, and, consequently, he becomes incapable of doing any act with an evil intent. Therefore, conversely, no action done by him could possibly affect his heart or mind evilly. Hence it is clear that the rule of judgment which must hold good in the case of ordinary mortals whose hearts are impure and who live impure lives and who have therefore to be purified of evil must not be made applicable in the case of exalted souls whose hearts have already been purged of evil.

The next day as usual there was the evening prayer. After it was over, Mahatmaji, calling out names, made friendly enquiries of each inmate of the Ashram present. In course of conversation, he made such humorous hits that he set the whole audience roar with laughter. Then, instead of delivering any exhortation himself, he requested Shri Stokes to deliver a sermon. Thus the prayer-meeting was over, and he went out for a stroll as on the previous evening. Then, in the early morning of the 8th October,

the third day of our stay, a well-known Bengali song composed by the Poet Rabindranath Tagore was sung in course of the prayer. The song had an enthralling effect on the audience, and even after the singing was over, Mahatmaji continued to remain motionless in his seat, and it was only after some time had elapsed that he rose, and with slow steps walked to his room without delivering his sermon. He would not want to interfere with the deep spiritual effect of the song by any words of exhortation of his.

About an hour after, when it was daybreak, I went and took my seat near him. His first words were that everyday, and for a fixed period, I must make it a rule to spin. Then he said that it was necessary also to practise carding cotton, which I should do at spare times. Here "Ba" brought in Mahatmaji's breakfast, and as he went on sipping his milk, he asked me to read out to him a couple of articles contributed by Shri Stokes to the *Independent* newspaper. They were going to be published in book form, and it was Shri Stokes' desire that Mahatmaji should write a foreword to it. The breakfast over, Mahatmaji was going to write it; when Shrimati Anasuyabehn entered with an English gentleman from the city. This gentleman was private tutor to the children of Shri Ambalal Sarabhai, a cotton-mill-owner of Ahmedabad, and brother of Shrimati Anasuyabehn. After a short talk with him, Mahatmaji deputed me to show him round the Ashram. The gentleman was so nice, simple and quiet that I easily felt drawn towards him. He also was pleased with me, and asked what I was. "I am one of Mahatmaji's humble attendants," was my reply. He then brought out his kodak from his pocket, and took snapshots of different parts of the Ashram. Returning, he approached Mahatmaji for permission to take a snapshot of him also. Mahatmaji said, "If you ask for my permission, I can't give it; because I have definitely made up my mind not to give a sitting. But I will not prevent you from taking a snapshot of me, if you so desire, provided you do it without attracting my notice, or interfering with my



work." Mahatmaji then resumed his writing, and the gentleman took his snapshot.

A certain photographer of Bombay was present there at the time, who having heard all that Mahatmaji was saying did not leave the Ashram as he had intended, but stayed for a few days taking photos of Mahatmaji in his various postures. Finding that the gentleman was so persistent in his efforts, Mahatmaji one day told him with a laugh, "I tell you, you can't take an exact likeness of me ; in fact, nobody has so far succeeded in reproducing my figure. My form is never constant, it undergoes various transformations in the course of the day." The meaning of this was not clear to me at the time. But since then having lived with Mahatmaji uninterruptedly a long time, I have come to observe that his appearance does not indeed continue the same at all times. Sometimes he has appeared to me like a young man of twenty-five, pursuing his work with infinite and indomitable energy. At other times, again, his look has been that of an octogenarian, a shrivelled figure, bent with the weight of years. What is at the bottom of all these fluctuations, I cannot definitely say. But I guess that the particles of his body may have become so pure and so shorn of grossness as to lend themselves to ready changes in response to the changes of feeling within. It is as though his body has become a perfect mirror reflecting the feelings of his heart.

At 10 o'clock on the morning of 7th October, Lala Lajpatrai and Shri Viththalbhai Patel (the elder Patel) called on Mahatmaji, and had a discussion with him about the likelihood of Government arresting him. Mahatmaji said that the only thing that stood in the way of the Government arresting him was their fear of forfeiting the sympathies and support of the Moderates and so they were hesitating. Lalaji and Shri Patel, however, would not accept that view. It seemed that neither of these leaders reposed the least confidence in the constancy of the Moderates. Mahatmaji, however, continued to stress his view of the matter. Lalaji said that the signs of fearlessness which were visible in the country everywhere and

which were due solely to the example of Mahatmaji explained the hesitancy of the Government. Lalaji having then expressed his desire to discuss something with Mahatmaji in private, I came away.

That day Lalaji and Shri Patel both dined at the Ashram. There were a number of mischievous dogs at the Ashram. They made it impossible for any one to eat his meal in peace. So when Lalaji sat down to lunch, Mahatmaji stood there preventing the dogs from coming near. During his last tour round the country I was an eye-witness of the homage and almost royal honours paid to Mahatmaji by people at large. And now when I saw him busily engaged in the task of driving away the Ashram dogs, I compared the pictures in my mind and to me it seemed that both were equally appropriate.

In the course of the afternoon, there came to visit Mahatmaji Shri Valji Desai, the then assistant editor of *Young India*, Swami Anand, assistant editor of the *Gujarati Navajivan*, and several others, all co-workers of Mahatmaji. I was struck by Mahatmaji's manner, and the cordiality shown towards them all. It became clear to me that work under him did not mean any sacrifice of independence, or of self-respect, or of individuality of character. Thus time rolled lazily away. I had done nothing worth doing in the course of the last three days, and a silent fear was beginning to creep into me. For although I was living with Mahatmaji, I was apprehensive lest I should lose hold of my anchor, and drift along the stream of passing events.\*

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\* Then follows a visit with Mahatmaji to Bombay and thence north to the district of Surat.

## CHAPTER XVII

### PREPARING TO BID FAREWELL — I.

Mahatmaji returned to the Ashram on the morning of the 13th October, 1921, and stayed till the very end of the month. Then he left for Delhi on the 1st November, in order to attend the meetings of the Congress Working Committee and All-India Congress Committee to be held there on the 3rd and the 4th respectively. These nineteen days (October 13—October 31) were days of seclusion passed at the Ashram. Nevertheless we shall find that the seclusion was not all seclusion, but that Mahatmaji had been planning schemes of action of far-reaching import. For in those nineteen days were sown seeds of events which in time gave a new direction to the whole movement. The reader knows that on the 4th October, the all-India leaders had met at Bombay and signed a Leaders' Manifesto, as it was called, declaring "the inherent right of every one to express his opinion without restraint about the propriety or otherwise of citizens offering their services to, or remaining in the employ of, the Government, whether in the civil or the military department," without being held guilty of tampering with the loyalty of soldiers or other Government servants. This manifesto was published at Bombay on the 5th October. Since then Mahatmaji had been working steadily towards mass civil disobedience. So arriving at the Ashram he began to utilize every opportunity of making clear to the members the underlying principles of civil disobedience, and the goal to which it leads. It was at this time that Shris Dayalji and Kalyanji of Surat came to invite Mahatmaji to visit the Bardoli Taluka, and informed him that in their opinion the taluka had acquired the necessary competence to launch on a campaign of mass civil disobedience. This was a very important circumstance as we shall see. In the meantime, having resolved in his own

mind that the time for coming to grips with the Government was rapidly approaching, Mahatmaji deemed it necessary gently to break to the fellow-workers and members of the Ashram that the hour for parting would soon arrive, and that therefore they must prepare for the final act of leave-taking. Already he had conceived in his mind of a definite scheme for starting civil disobedience. This he was going to place before the All-India Congress Committee at its coming session at Delhi.

In the meanwhile an unforeseen difficulty had presented itself. Shri Vijayaraghavachari, the venerable President of the Nagpur Congress (held in previous December), started the difficulty. He enjoyed universal esteem for his intense devotion to the country's cause. Advanced in years, he did not fall in with the Moderates, who favoured the policy of following the lead of the Government in matters political. Nor was he an out-and-out supporter of Mahatmaji in advocating a policy of non-co-operation. This was apparent at the Nagpur Congress itself. This difference of outlook between him and the non-co-operating leaders began to manifest itself in various ways. The executive powers of the Congress were entrusted in the first instance to the All-India Congress Committee (A. I. C. C.) when the Congress was not in session. Then under the rules passed by the last preceding Congress, a small Committee called the All-India Congress Working Committee which was to meet more frequently had been empowered to transact business as the Executive of the A. I. C. C. when the latter body was not in session. Now this Working Committee in the exercise of its powers as the executive of the A. I. C. C. had convened a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee on the 4th November at Delhi. Shri Vijayaraghavachari, the Congress President, and ex-officio President of the A. I. C. C., thought it his duty to veto the proposed A. I. C. C. meeting. This led to a keen controversy in the Press between him and Pandit Motilal Nehru, the Secretary of the Congress, as to the respective powers and privileges of the President and the Working Committee — a controversy which has become

memorable in the annals of the Congress. While the controversy was going on, a number of telegraphic messages having been received by Mahatmaji from the President, Mahatmaji instructed me to send the same to Pandit Motilalji for his private information. It transpired afterwards that Pandit Motilalji had printed and circulated them among the members of the A. I. C. C. This was a matter of great regret to Mahatmaji, who had never intended that a private correspondence should be made public in that way. As early as 13th October, Motilalji had apprised Mahatmaji of the President's having vetoed the proposed meeting of the A. I. C. C. To this Mahatmaji had wired briefly the reply, "I suggest courteous ignoring President's word." That was what ultimately resulted at the meeting of the A. I. C. C., in spite of the heated discussions and controversies over it in the Press. The President, Shri Vijayaraghavachari, of course, did not put in an appearance, but nothing untoward happened in consequence.

Meantime, Pandit Madanmohan Malaviya, had an interview with the Viceroy, Lord Reading, at Simla. He arrived at the Ashram on the 22nd October to have a consultation with Mahatmaji. Lord Reading had arranged that the Prince of Wales should visit India and set foot on Indian soil at Bombay on 17th November (1921), and he was determined that at whatever cost the visit must be made an unqualified success. The Viceroy had made up his mind that there should be a grand popular demonstration in favour of the Prince. In Mahatmaji's opinion, and that of the Congress Executive, however, the visit had a deep political object; and the Congress Working Committee was determined to frustrate Lord Reading's plans. The Committee had accordingly definitely proclaimed by a resolution \* that "on the day of the landing of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, there should be a general *hartal* throughout India; and as to the effective boycott of any public welcome to His Royal Highness during his visit to the different cities of India,

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\* Resolution No. 4 passed at Bombay on 5th October, 1921.

the Working Committee leaves the arrangements in the hands of the respective Provincial Congress Committees." The reason for proposing to withhold the Indian people's welcome to His Royal Highness was no disloyalty to the Royal House or to the Throne. This had been made clear by the A. I. C. C. in the following resolution passed at Bombay on 28th July, 1921: "The All-India Congress Committee desires to place on record its opinion that India bears no sort of feeling against the person of His Royal Highness and that this advice to refrain from participating in or assisting in any welcome to His Royal Highness or any functions organized officially or otherwise in connection with this visit, is tendered because the Committee regards the proposed visit as a political move and calculated to give strength and support to a system of Government that has resulted in a breach of faith with the Mussalmans of India and atrocious injustice to the people of India as during the Martial Law days in 1919 in the Punjab and a system that is designed to keep India as long as possible from her birthright of Swaraj." What, however, weighed with Lord Reading in persisting to bring to India His Royal Highness in spite of the growing unrest and discontent brought to a head by the non-co-operation movement, and in spite of the declared opposition of most of the Local Governments and Administrations of India was his Lordship's hope and belief that what happened in India in 1905, when the present King-Emperor, as Prince of Wales had visited this country, could be repeated this time also in India. In other words, it was his Lordship's hope and belief that the Prince's visit would awaken once again the inborn, slumbering loyalty of the Indian masses, and that as a consequence the Indian millions forsaking Mahatma Gandhi and his non-co-operating Congress would flock to the standard of the British Government. Lord Reading, however, had ample opportunities of discovering in the course of the four or five weeks following upon the landing of the Prince at Bombay that the problem of tackling unrest and discontent in India was not to be so easily solved. All

that happened subsequently by means of negotiation to persuade Mahatma Gandhi and the non-co-operators to withdraw their opposition to a welcome to the Prince had its genesis, it appears to me, in this visit of Pandit Malaviya. This diplomatic effort, however, failed, as will be seen in another chapter.

These days of Mahatmaji's stay at the Ashram (13—31 October) were days clearly marked out, for they bring out the fact that events were marching steadily to a denouement. I therefore present in the form of a diary a narrative of Mahatmaji's thoughts, sentiments and work during this period of his Ashram life. It would show also the nature and extent of my connection with his daily life and activities. This diary has been culled from the letters that I wrote to my teacher, Shri Mukerji, at the time, and though every important incident or discourse might not have been entered, still, it would give a general idea of Mahatmaji's manner of life from day to day, and the ways of his thinking during the period in question.

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*13th October (1921) :*

I find him treating me with even greater kindness than before, since our return from Surat, the reason for which is not quite apparent to me. I, too, have begun like others to address him as Bapuji, and am solicitous even as a son, of his blessings. It is part of his exalted character not to distribute his favours on grounds of high and low as between man and man. As the fight is assuming more and more serious proportions, and the hour for employing the greatest weapon in the armoury of non-co-operators—mass civil disobedience—is drawing nearer and nearer, Mahatmaji seems to be developing a greater and greater reflectiveness, a greater and greater intentness of spirit. Every minute to him is now precious; not a single minute could be spared for idle talk. I am simply astonished to see how hard he has been working. The trial of the Ali Brothers is proceeding at Karachi. Some of the people around Mahatmaji had been finding fault with them for

their conduct in court and creating scenes. Mahatmaji however said in support of the Brothers that such conduct would have one good effect, namely, that it would destroy the false prestige of the British Courts. But he took care also to emphasize that for him such conduct would have been impossible. For said he, "In my case it would be like a lamb before the sacrificial post."

In his *Young India* Mahatmaji has been saying very hard things of the Government, perhaps to draw upon himself the vials of Governmental wrath. To me it seems that here there is the deep anguish of a distressed soul, pining to lay his head on the sacrificial altar in order that he may be beheaded, and the intended victim be set free by the oppressor.

On another occasion, speaking to a certain gentleman, Mahatmaji expressed himself thus: "I have heard that when once a serpent has bitten its victim, it has emptied itself of its whole quota of venom. So I am working to the end that the Government might bite me, and pour out on my devoted head the whole of its venom, and thus get freed from its poison."

Another day Mahatmaji talked of *himsa* (violence), and the method of combating it. "What is the root cause of *himsa*? If there was no pleasure in it, none would indulge in it. When the tiger goes in pursuit of the lamb, the latter flees for its life; and in most cases, wild beasts hunt innocent animals merely in a spirit of sport, or for the pleasure of the chase. Granted that between the tiger and the lamb there is an inborn relationship of the 'eaten and the eater'. But if it were possible for lambs, whenever they came in sight of tigers, to meet tigers face to face without any fear in their hearts, then in no time could the latter be cured of their propensity to attack the former. This British Government in India is fully equipped with a whole armoury of weapons enabling it at any moment to launch a campaign of killing. An opportunity for doing so ministers to its spirit of militarism, and it feels immensely pleased and gratified. The



only way to put an end to, or curb on, this propensity to fight would be for the people to cultivate a spirit of absolute fearlessness in their attitude towards the Government. If this could be done, the pleasure derived by militarists from inflicting injury upon terrorized victims would no longer be felt. Thus when the Government would no longer find scope for establishing its rule on the basis of organized violence, it would be bound to recognize that the only alternative left to it would be government according to the will of the people." I could now see why Mahatmaji is so much against secret violence. I could see also why the success of mass civil disobedience is dependent equally on non-violence and absolute fearlessness on the part of civil resisters. It is fearlessness of the highest order that can withstand a hail of bullets without getting demoralized or without succumbing to the temptation of retaliating.

One day, a professor from the National University of Gujarat came and put the following questions to Mahatmaji : "Bapuji, I wonder what could have suggested to you the plan of offering resistance by way of non-violence. The history of the world does not furnish a single instance of unarmed resistance, of resistance without violence. From what events or experiences, or from what book did you first derive the idea of a non-violent mode of political warfare ? "

Mahatmaji paused for a while, and then made the following answer : "It was in South Africa when that Pathan assaulted and stabbed me that the idea first struck me.\* "

The Professor : "That is very strange, indeed ! If one assaults me, my instinctive impulse would be to retaliate and hit back. How is it possible to wish well of one who inflicts an injury on me ? My happiness would then lie

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\* This incident is worthy of special attention. It throws abundant light on the true meaning of the doctrine of non-violent warfare as promulgated by Mahatma Gandhi. Secondly, it affords evidence of the fact that it was from this time forward that he seriously thought about tackling the problem of Hindu-Muslim conflict.

in avenging the injury. How should it be possible to feel happy when I have to bear a load of pain in my bosom? 'I am the lord, I am blessed' † — such sentiments seem to be quite natural to a human being."

Mahatmaji gave a patient hearing to the Professor, but his answer was brief: 'Yes, you think so; and that is because in you the ego is too strong. The ego in me is not so strong and my way of looking at the question is different.'

On another day, I heard him saying: "I have been conserving all my *josh*." The two words *rosh* and *josh* in Hindi are used by Mahatmaji in two distinct senses. *Rosh* is what is ordinarily known as anger; it is a selfish instinct requiring control. But *josh* is a righteous form of energy called forth to defend truth and justice. The energy of *rosh* is generated in the hearts of selfish people when they find some selfish end of theirs thwarted. But the righteous form of energy, the energy of *josh*, is evolved in the hearts of unselfish people. They see a fight going on between truth and untruth and feel the call to defeat untruth and re-install truth."

14th October:

Maulana Azad Sobani of Kanpur has accompanied Mahatmaji to the Ashram from Bombay. The Maulana has composed in Urdu a lengthy manifesto condemning the forced conversion of Hindus by the Moplahs of Malabar during the recent Moplah rebellion. Mahatmaji has referred him to me to have it rendered into English. Mahatmaji has given him to understand that there was no need to trouble about the matter as "Krishnadas would do it all right." The message is inordinately long, and, what is worse, written in high-flown Urdu. I can hardly find my way through the tangle of words and phrases, and I am confronted with the problem of how to extract the vital parts of the message and write them out simply and lucidly.

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† This is an English rendering of a scriptural statement in Sanskrit, wrongly interpreted here by the Professor.

Having been occupied with the Maulana Saheb's work, I have hardly had any opportunities today of going near Mahatmaji ; I have peeped into his room, but have always found him surrounded by people, and always busy with his own work. About six o'clock, I was cleaning my plate after the evening meal, when Surendraji came and informed me that I was wanted by Mahatmaji immediately, and he offered to do the cleaning for me. Thinking that there must be some work of special urgency for me, I made haste and soon presented myself before Mahatmaji, when he handed to me a lengthy registered letter, and asked me to tell him its substance. The letter was from a Mussalman gentleman, and was an earnest appeal to Mahatmaji to accept the Islamic faith. Mahatmaji's reply was short and as follows : " He (Mahatmaji) is a seeker after Truth. The acceptance of a certain view of religion as true is not the same as discovering the truth for himself. It is necessary to strive unceasingly to discover the truth. He (Mahatmaji) believes that the truth is not so easily attainable as the Mussalman brother thinks it is. He (Mahatmaji) is of opinion that it is not attainable merely by subscribing to the truth of any religious article in the manner in which the Mussalman brother has done." Then, he gave me several other letters which were to be filed and said, ' Considerable arrears of work have got to be disposed of and I have much to dictate to you.' When he was speaking to me, I suspected that he was not all well, and I enquired. He said, " Yes, there is some slight fever ; it is nothing much. It will soon be off." At intervals there were manifestations of bodily pain, which I could notice. Just then the prayer bell rang out, and Mahatmaji rose and left for the prayer-meeting. After the prayers, a car came for him from the city, and he drove away.

I asked Devadas where he might be going with the fever on him. " He is going to attend a meeting in the city," was the reply. So in spite of his fever he must attend the meeting. There is a lot of writing to be done by him tomorrow, as he has told me ; but he is unwell.

It is quite likely, therefore, that I shall have to be by his side the whole of tomorrow. But I shall also have to finish the Maulana Saheb's work, and my clothes have all got dirty. I shall have also to wash them with soap myself, according to the practice in the Ashram. There are neither servants nor washermen here.

*15th October :*

Today I had no time to do much writing. The Maulana Saheb sent me a reminder early in the morning for his paper ; but he does not know that I do not possess the knack of rapid composition. At noon Mahatmaji sent for me, and I was engaged with him till evening, writing letters, telegrams etc. Apparently the fever has left him, as appears from his freer manner today. This is October ; but even now there are some indications of the approach of winter cold. I hear that winter in Ahmedabad is severer than in Bengal.

Today I heard Mahatmaji telling someone, "The Gujaratis by their trade have been draining away Bengali wealth. By so doing they are accumulating a great sin." The Bengalis lacking the commercial instinct, the Gujaratis have been steadily gaining predominance in Bengal in the field of trade and commerce. This state of things, it appeared to me, was not to Mahatmaji's liking. On another occasion Mahatmaji said to someone, "There are people who think I did not do the right thing when I gave up my practice as a barrister. But what should it have availed me, if I continued practising as a barrister ? I should have lost my health, and into the bargain, I should have created an army of dependents living on my charity. But having adopted the present mode of life, I find that not a single member of the Gandhi family has turned an idler or a loafer. Every one is skilled in some kind of work or other. So even considering the matter from a purely business point of view, there has been profit, and no loss."

*16th October :*

I was fully occupied with work of various kinds the whole of yesterday ; nevertheless I have been feeling

rather lonely and dejected. Here in this unfamiliar land, far away from my own people, and yet with people surrounding me on every side, I am feeling as if I was living a life of loneliness. Mahatmaji's plan, it seems, is to go on heaping work on work, so that the mind might not wander about for want of occupation. He believes that an effectual curb could be put upon one's mind if one is set to do spinning work on the *charkha*. Mahatmaji is convinced that those who desire to ennoble and purify their lives would do well to take to spinning as a spiritual exercise. They would then discover for themselves that it is possible to gain therefrom a great deal of good in the way of mind-control and self-purification.

From today a new system comes into being in our "Big Kitchen". Pyarelalji, Surendraji and Balkoba will henceforth cook each for himself and not have their meals from the "Big Kitchen". They will have also to do spinning and weaving for the best part of the day. Mahatmaji is going to decide whether the country is ripe for civil disobedience by taking note of the spread of the spinning wheel and the handloom; and he wishes his own family to carry out the system that he wants the whole country to follow. He sent for me last evening, and said, "You must help Ba in the kitchen work as far as you can; otherwise she would hardly be able to cope with it." I replied that I was ready to do my best. He then enquired if I was doing my spinning regularly, and if my health was all right, etc.

Mahatmaji is not now (afternoon) in the Ashram. He has gone to attend a meeting of the Gujarat National College, and I am free. These days I have ceased to report his speeches as he always addresses the audience in Gujarati, which I cannot quite follow. Nor is there any real need for me to accompany Mahatmaji to meetings. Here he is in the midst of his own people, and there are so many eager and anxious to do his bidding. Devadas and I are not therefore called upon now to be in attendance upon him whenever he goes out. Ever since I have been

here I find that almost every evening after prayers he has been going to the city to attend some meeting or other.

18th October :

Woke up punctually at 4 in the morning, and spread out the carpet for the prayer-meeting. Immediately after prayers, I spun for an hour and a half. Last evening I was with Mahatmaji in his room till 9-30 p.m. I had to do so as yesterday was his "day of silence". All the time he was engaged in writing something. This morning he revised it and gave it to me for despatch to the *Young India* office. I found that it was all "Notes" for this week. Then he handed to me several newspapers which I was to look over and from which I was to make cuttings, if there was anything which he ought to look into. He asked me to write a letter to Shri Rajagopalachari of Madras, and also gave me some correspondence to do. In addition, I have now and then to attend to the small details of work in the kitchen. For Devadas would not give me much of kitchen work to do, and would himself attend to the more laborious items. But I find that, little by little, the opportunity has been coming to me to clean and wash Mahatmaji's plates, to peel the fruits for him, and take to him his food, and do similar other services. I am feeling that it is part of my good fortune to be able to serve him in these various ways. The Maulana Saheb has drafted another message in Urdu, and made it over to me for translation into English. The Maulana, a learned scholar of ripe experience, is ever engaged in discriminating between the "fitness" and the "unfitness" of every single thing. His minute examination of even the most insignificant matters has often reminded me of the keenness with which our ancient Hindu logicians debated as to whether the thud accompanying the fall of the fruit from the palm tree is precedent or antecedent to the fall.

19th October :

While in Bombay, I met Shri Shyamasundar Chakravarti, editor of the *Servant* of Calcutta. I have no present recollection of what passed between him and me. But I remember that he put me one special question. He said

to me, "What do you think is characteristic of Mahatmaji's life?" In answer, I gave him a number of incidents of Mahatmaji's life to show in a general way the vast difference between his ways and the ways of ordinary men. "Nevertheless," said I "there is one thing in special, which is truly characteristic of Mahatmaji. It is this. He does not look upon anybody as in any special sense his own, so much so that even his own wife and sons are not allowed to think or feel that they have any special claim on him. It appears as if everybody has an equal claim on him, and he looks upon all with an equal eye. That such is the mark of highly elevated souls I have known, having read of it in books. But in the case of Mahatmaji, I have been able to study it at first hand, through numberless little facts and incidents of his life."

Last evening, after a whole day's work I was feeling tired, and had betaken myself to my room for rest. But I was sent for by Mahatmaji, for there were still arrears of correspondence to clear off. To some of the letters he had himself written out replies. But having spent the best part of the day in writing for *Young India*, he also was feeling fatigued and so my help was necessary. He handed to me some of the letters to answer, with instructions as to how they were to be answered. He would sign the letters, but I must write out the answers myself. I had to remain with him till 10 p.m. doing as he asked me. He put several "reports" into my hand and asked me to give him their substance orally, then and there. About the letters I thought that if I could give him satisfaction by writing out the replies properly, that would considerably lighten his labours. That thought cheered me; but I felt also a creeping fear that I was likely to fail; for the work was responsible, and my powers were so limited. He has a style of his own which consists in expressing the maximum of thought within the compass of the minimum of words. It would be no easy matter for me to be able to imitate this style. Besides, there was the question of writing English correctly. I was thus feeling uneasy. However. I have done some of the letters and submitted

them to him. He has signed them without making any material alterations. This has to some extent dispelled my fears. Then he has given me some further work to do. He has asked me to look through the old files of *Young India* and *Times Year Book*, and find out some references for him. This I have also done. I had enough experience of this sort of work in connection with the *Dawn Magazine* having had to find out references for my teacher, Shri Mukerji (the editor). This kind of work has no terrors for me. But I do feel nervous when writing letters which would go over Mahatmaji's signature. I would not mind writing letters for Mahatmaji over my own name.

I hear that we shall be leaving for Delhi on the 30th instant. The All-India Congress Committee will commence its business at Delhi on the 4th November. From Delhi we shall be going to Lahore for a day or two. Mahatmaji has made up his mind not to go out on any further tours. He has set his heart on concentrating on Gujarat, and making it the centre of his activities. It would appear that he is about to launch a new and big campaign with Gujarat as the base. He is watching how things are progressing in each separate district of Gujarat and contributing articles every week to the *Navajivan* (his Gujarati weekly), discussing matters from fresh points of view, and preparing the mind of the Gujaratis for the coming struggle. But Lala Lajpatrai has addressed a most appealing telegram of invitation, and although Mahatmaji is most unwilling to go anywhere outside Gujarat, he has had to consent to be at Lahore for a day or two, after finishing his work at Delhi. Mahatmaji has made an exception here, for invitations (by wire) have been pouring in everyday, and he has consistently declined them all.

20th October :

6-30 a.m. I am not going to spin now as I have something very important to write which I must do immediately. This morning after the prayers, Mahatmaji addressed us at some length. I could not understand his Gujarati, but I could hear him making frequent mention of my name and that of another Ashram member. I therefore



made every effort to follow his speech, but I could not make out anything. Afterwards I got an Ashram friend of mine to report for me Mahatmaji's address, and I am giving below the gist. Mahatmaji had spoken for about 40 minutes, and my friend could not give a very lucid account; nevertheless the substantial facts may be gathered from what follows.

Mahatmaji began thus: "As soon as I woke up this morning at four, my mind involuntarily turned towards two persons, — one being X and the other Krishnadas." He enquired if X was present at the prayer meeting and learning that he was not, he paused for a while, and then went on to say, "I have noticed that something has been worrying X always; but I have found also that whatever the work entrusted to him, he does it most ungrudgingly. He keeps his grief to himself, but expects at the same time that I should be able to probe it myself. But I am always so busy with work that to keep an eye on every one of you, finding out your particular needs and grievances, would be almost an impossibility for me, unless of course you came and frankly told me all about them. I am, therefore, in a fix not knowing how to help X out of his trouble. If any of you can tell me what it is, I shall feel relieved and know how to deal with it." Mahatmaji next said, "When lately all sorts of rumours of my arrest were in the air, I expressed the wish that the publication of *Young India* should be suspended. But since then (and even so recently as the day before yesterday), many friends have approached me and given me their assurance that there was no need to worry over *Navajivan* and *Young India*, and that they would be able to conduct both in a manner worthy of their past, during my absence in gaol. I am not particular about *Navajivan*, but my belief is that it would not be easy to preserve the style and individuality of *Young India*. But the thing may be possible if I can give the necessary training to people from now. For this I have chosen Pyarelal and Krishnadas. Every one of us here in the Ashram should think it his duty to become responsible for, and specialize in, some particular work.

For I am not sure how it will fare with me when January comes. If Swaraj is won, even then our work will not be over ; on the contrary its scope will widen enormously. For then we shall have to work ceaselessly to prevent the country from lapsing into its old state of torpor or apathy. On the other hand, if Swaraj is not won, it will be incumbent on you to undertake the responsibility of conducting the Ashram, and then each one of you will have to take charge of some one or other branch of Ashram work. If there is no Swaraj, I cannot tell you now what is in store for me. May be, I shall be lodged in prison ; or it might also be that my bodily system would receive a shock from which it might not recover. Therefore, it is for you now, before I have left you, to think and decide on your course of action, and to that end each one of you can put me such questions as you feel necessary."

After giving these necessary instructions, Mahatmaji dwelt at great length on the need for observing the vows and rules of the Ashram, sorrowfully pointing out that there were many who kept away from the prayer meetings.

Mahatmaji's remarks have produced a great stir throughout the Ashram, and I found the inmates assembling in groups, conversing and discussing Mahatmaji's question. It was understood that he was preparing to bid farewell to them, and the faces of all were sad and heavy with the weight of deep anxiety.

Almost the whole of the day Mahatmaji was working without intermission. At 3 o'clock he was feeling exhausted, and so laid himself down to rest for a short while. I was asked to keep away the flies. He speaks so fast when giving orders that one could with difficulty follow him. I sat fanning away the flies. There has been a regular invasion of flies at the Ashram this season. They are proving extremely troublesome but Mahatmaji would bear the annoyance in silence. That is why we have now and then to go and fan away the flies without our being asked by him. He went to bed at 8 p.m. I also was feeling tired. But he asked me to rub oil. At night when he takes to his bed for sleep, oil is rubbed on his forehead and feet.

That has been the usual practice. Twice he pointed to his chest without saying anything ; but I could not catch his meaning, and went on as before. He kept silent. Then when " Ba " came there, he uttered the one word " chest ". She explained to me that no more oil was to be applied to the forehead. Then, bidding me go to bed, she herself began to rub the oil on his chest. I continued to sit near Mahatmaji for a little while longer, and then left and went to sleep at 9 p.m.

#### CHAPTER XVIII

#### PREPARING TO BID FAREWELL — II

*21st October :*

Going to bed at 9 last evening, I got up at three this morning. I find that nowadays I do not stand in need of more than six hours of sleep. Rising, I saw all Nature wearing a smiling appearance in the clear, silver moonlight. The inmates of the Ashram were all fast asleep. Far away on the other bank of the river is the cremation ground of Ahmedabad. In that solemn stillness of the night someone was chanting aloud some Sanskrit hymn while performing his ablutions on the burning-ghat. I rose and with slow, gentle steps walked to the prayer-ground. There I gave myself up to musing and my thoughts revolved in no coherent manner round the question of my country, of the movement, and of Mahatmaji himself. Since the day Shri Mukerji heard that in Mahatmaji's opinion his body might not survive the shock of the failure of his movement, he has been impressing upon me the duty of devoting myself heart and soul to ministering to the needs and comforts of Mahatmaji's body. He strongly believes that there is a hidden power in personal service, if it is truly sincere and disinterested, which can so work on the inner spirit of man as to make it impossible for it to yield to the temptation of desiring a separation from the physical body. But such power and privilege of true disinterested service, thought I, must be

a special gift vouchsafed by Providence and I could not discover how I was specially qualified for that exalted type of work. While I sat revolving these thoughts in my mind, I saw Mahatmaji leaving his bed. The open verandah where he sleeps could be seen from the prayer-ground. I could see from my distance that, as soon as he got up, he took up a broom and began sweeping the floor of his sitting room. I ran up to him, and took from him the broom and began to sweep myself. In the meantime, he himself spread out his carpet and arranged the desk and writing materials. As soon as everything was ready he was busy writing something. Now-a-days, the morning prayer meeting sits at 5-30 instead of at 5. So when it was time he left his writing work and joined in the prayer. I went up to him again at 6-30, when it was quite light. He said to me, "From tomorrow forward, let my sitting room be swept clean, and the carpet laid, at 4 o'clock." I promised that it would be done. He next inquired if I could follow all that he spoke yesterday at the prayer-meeting. I said, "I could not understand your Gujarati speech; but I got it from an inmate who understood you that you wished to train me for work in connection with *Young India*." To this Mahatmaji replied, "Not you alone, But Pyarelal also. I have asked some others too, to write something. Henceforth you will also write something everyday, and submit the same to me. I want to see how the work would go on in my absence. *Young India* has become very influential now-a-days, and you can do a great deal of good by its means. That is why I am anxious to get for myself from beforehand some rough idea as to how far the work of *Young India* could go on in my absence."

I wanted to make clear to Mahatmaji my own position in the matter. So I began thus, "I hardly think that it would be possible for any one else to conduct *Young India* in the way you are doing. The words that come out of the depths of your heart are endowed with a special energy. Even if others said the very same things, these would not carry the same conviction. For, in my opinion, your words

carry with them some latent power which gives them their authority."

Then I proceeded to add : " Whatever I am ordered to do, I will try my very best to carry out. But I cannot forget that the power of assimilation is something wholly different from the power of origination. During my long years of association with Shri Mukerji, I had opportunities of getting familiar with higher thoughts and ideas, and I have acquired also something of the power of following and understanding an intellectual discussion. But if a new problem arises, and I be called upon to think independently on it and solve it for myself, I fear I have not the power of doing so ; nor have I such confidence in me that I shall be able to acquire it soon. Further, I have noticed one characteristic of your writing. In your answer to the Poet Rabindranath Tagore's article " The Call of Truth ", while not hesitating to expose what you conceived to be the Poet's errors, you have not failed to do full justice to what you recognized to be true in that article. For us to preserve this mental balance is very difficult. We are so much at the mercy of our likes and our dislikes that, roughly speaking, these and not the call of Truth may be said to determine our course of action. In many instances we find that the power of separating the true from the untrue in any particular matter, and then of holding to the true, while disowning the untrue, that power is denied to us."

Mahatmaji was pleased with what I said ; but he wanted to explain that there was no cause for fear : " What you say is perfectly true," said he, " but persevere. If you persevere you will find that the power of discrimination and judgment will slowly unfold itself. For the time-old basic truths of the universe are not more than a few in number. All other truths are but applications of those primary truths to altered circumstances, times and places. The basic truths would remain the same now as hereafter ; but the applied truths would vary from time to time with the change of time, place and environment. Therefore, the more firmly you are rooted in your convictions as regards the basic truths, the more readily will the power

of "originality" or "invention" come to you. From an early age I have had my training in separating truths from untruths, and looking at them as two distinct entities. The power of discriminating truth from untruth has therefore become quite natural for me. I am thus in a position to do justice to even an iota of truth although it might lie obscured among a heap of untruth. Of one and the same principle, the positive aspect is known as truth, and the negative as *ahimsa* or non-violence. Everything is included in truth. On principle, therefore, there is no need for preaching *ahimsa* separately. Nevertheless such propaganda has become necessary in view of the special requirements of the times. If one is firmly planted in truth, *ahimsa* or non-violence follows as a matter of course." After giving me this advice, Mahatmaji exhorted me again to write something for *Young India* everyday. He told me that whatever was worth accepting in my writing, he would accept; the rest he would reject. This injunction of Mahatmaji's I must carry out whatever the cost. Having seen the whole country with my own eyes in Mahatmaji's company, I am now experiencing a certain change of feeling within. I am beginning to envisage India from a new angle of vision as an altogether new entity. Hitherto I was not accustomed to think on any problem affecting the country with a sense of personal responsibility; but my experiences gathered during the last tour will stand me in good stead, and I must henceforth begin to think on Indian problems so as to equip myself for Mahatmaji's task.

*22nd October :*

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya arrived here this morning, and was closeted with Mahatmaji for two hours. When Pandit Malaviya arrived, Mahatmaji was not in his room, and not knowing where he had gone, I went about in all hurry to make enquiries. Those who live in the Ashram with their families are lodged at some distance in houses standing in a double row which look like barracks. When I arrived there, I found Mahatmaji going about from door to door, and enquiring about the needs and

conveniences of the inmates. My impression at the time was that he was then taking his final leave of them all, in that way. While he was so engaged, I went and informed him of Pandit Malaviya's arrival. He soon came back to his room. Panditji now saw Mahatmaji for the first time wearing his loin-cloth and with a bare body. Mahatmaji was looking like an ascetic and Panditji was visibly moved. Advancing towards him and warmly grasping his hand, Panditji feelingly said, "Why, brother, should you thus dress yourself? Is it right?" Then they sat together, and the conversation being private, I came away from Mahatmaji's room. Once I looked from a distance, and saw that Malaviyaji was explaining, and that Mahatmaji was quietly listening. It was now 12-30, and still the conference was not ended. With Malaviyaji has come his son Govind. Govind has given Devadas to understand that Malaviyaji had an interview with the Viceroy, Lord Reading, and that he has come to see Mahatmaji in that connection. Govind said, "I am absolutely certain father will be able to convince Mahatmaji." I do not know what all this is about; but I understand that Lord Reading has said nothing about Mahatmaji's arrest and I infer that Mahatmaji is not going to be arrested now.

#### *23rd October :*

This morning Mahatmaji inquired if yesterday I had written any article. I had to say, "No." I am feeling uneasy at not having been able to carry out his wishes. And yet, this morning also, when after prayers he was referring to *Young India*, he mentioned my name in that connection. I alone know how feeble are my powers. In the first place, my command over the English language is limited; and the subject-matter itself is too complex for my understanding. Not knowing how to acquire the power of thinking out difficult problems, I am feeling miserable and worried.

#### *24th October :*

Malaviyaji has joined us in the daily routine of the Ashram. He is not in the best of health, and yet last

morning when the prayer bell rang out at 4, he came and attended the prayer-meeting. Mahatmaji gave the seat of *Acharya* \* to Pandit Malaviya, and sitting by Panditji's side he joined in the prayers. The prayers over, Mahatmaji requested Malaviyaji to give some religious instruction to the members. Panditji, as befitted a true Brahman with whom offering of religious instruction is a birthright, gave a long discourse. Then in the course of the day he left the Ashram for the city.

This morning I attempted an article with the caption, "Under Swaraj", and wrote out a considerable part of it. Today being Monday, Mahatmaji's day of silence, I have to be constantly by his side; but as I had to write the article I could not spend much time with him. At three in the afternoon he sent for me through Devadas. He had given me a second Urdu message concerning the Moplah rebellion from the pen of Maulana Azad Sobani to translate into English. Knowing, as I did, that he had not been particularly impressed by the Maulana's first message on the same subject, I had not yet taken up the second. When I said that, he wrote down for me the words, "Just condense the whole into a single paragraph." This I did. I wanted also to explain why I had to keep away from him the whole of the day. I therefore submitted for his inspection as much of my article "Under Swaraj", as I had written, as also a note on the arrest of Shri Sengupta of Chittagong. He looked through them and wrote the following remarks: "Under Swaraj" is shaping itself all right; you should finish it. The Chittagong note is not bright enough, and is somewhat censorious." I explained that it was my intention to complete "Under Swaraj" with one more paragraph. He wrote in reply, "As it is, it does not read complete, or as if it is ending with two or three sentences — but try." I said that I was under the impression that the article was growing too long, and I had therefore thought fit to cut it short. But now I would write rather elaborately. Mahatmaji nodded assent.

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\* The officiating priest.



*25th October :*

I have succeeded in completing "Under Swaraj", and have submitted it to him. What fresh subject should I write about every day? That is the thought that is uppermost in my mind. I have never tried my hand at writing short paragraphs. Yet perhaps it is such writing that finds most favour with Mahatmaji. There is one particular defect from which I must free myself. In going to write I unconsciously drift into over-elaborateness, and my writing becomes heavy. What Mahatmaji wants is a clear, crisp and cut-and-dried style.

Pandit Malaviyaji had left day before yesterday, but Mahatmaji has sent him a wire asking for his presence again at Ahmedabad. The relations between the mill-owners and the mill-hands of Ahmedabad have been getting strained. Mahatmaji on behalf of the labourers has been trying his best to come to an understanding with the mill-owners. But nothing has come of the negotiations; and so as a last resource, he is contemplating a Satyagraha fight by the workmen. This apparently has brought down the owners, and they have agreed to submit the dispute to the arbitration of Pandit Malaviya. It appears probable that Panditji will have to spend some days at Ahmedabad in connection with this matter.

There is much to learn by observing how the negotiations are being conducted. Mahatmaji's method of fighting is quite novel. What becomes of a fight if there is no hurling of abusive epithets or no attempt at brow-beating? If a similar situation had arisen in Bengal, the sensation it would have created would have been immense. But what do we find here? Here we see the millionaire President of the Mill-owners' Association coming down from the city almost every day to the Ashram to meet Mahatmaji, sitting with him on the same carpet and discussing the points in dispute in a spirit of the utmost friendliness. Here are the representatives of two opposing parties, and the dispute itself is serious enough in all conscience; but if a stranger came and saw them, the impression he would carry with him would be that of two

friends engaged in a friendly chat. To be able to bring so much of gentleness and gentlemanliness to bear on the conduct of a fight on which both sides are so very keen is a unique phenomenon attributable to the power of Mahatmaji's character and personality. So also on other occasions, I have found that under his magnetic influence, persons coming to meet him left aside their hauteur and became the most sedate, calm and well-behaved of people.

Entering Mahatmaji's room at midday, I found him smiling all by himself in a gleeful mood. As soon as I entered he said, "Krishnadas, so many telegrams come to me daily, and yet not knowing what to do with the forms, I used to tear them. It gave me pain, and I was thinking on what use they could be put to. At last I have hit upon a plan." He then took up a form and showed me how to make a cover out of it. He then directed me to prepare envelopes from the telegraph forms received by us every day. I have begun to make these covers, and he has been using them for the purpose of his letters. He has given them the name of "Patent Envelopes". He finds so much genuine pleasure in using such covers that he would not touch envelopes of far superior quality even when they would be placed before him. This small matter, however, shows what keen judgment he brings to bear upon even small things. It also shows in a most striking manner how at a time when a fierce India-wide national fight was raging, Mahatmaji could keep himself cool and collected and, what was more remarkable still, keep up a lightsome mood.

I will give here another illustration of Mahatmaji's sense of humour and buoyancy of spirit. Some of the teachers of the National College in Bombay, having come on a visit to Ahmedabad during the *Diwali* holidays, saw Mahatmaji, and asked him for advice as to how they should best spend the vacation. He was observing silence on that day and wrote down the following answer :

Card, Spin, Weave ;  
Spin, Weave, Card ;  
Weave, Card, Spin.

On reading the reply the teachers burst out laughing ; while one of them took the piece of paper on which it was written to be kept as a memento.

It has been arranged that, leaving Sabarmati on 1st November by the 2 p.m. train, we should reach Delhi on the evening of the 2nd. Then, perhaps, after a tour of only a few days in the Punjab, we shall be returning to the Ashram. Mahatmaji is most reluctant nowadays to leave Gujarat and go elsewhere for other work. Here in Gujarat the spread of *khaddar* has been the most striking. Gujarat also seems to have acquired a firmer hold on methods of non-violent work than any of the other provinces. It seems to me that Mahatmaji would send his ultimatum to Government about the middle of November and stake his all on it. As day succeeds day, I am struck by the fact that he now and then lapses into moods of absent-mindedness. From the day of his arrival at the Ashram, people were coming, group after group, to have a sight of him, and the rush of visitors was particularly great on sacred days like the *Ekadasi* \* or on days of religious festivity. And every day there were offerings made to Mahatmaji, ranging from small amounts like two annas, four annas or eight annas to one, five or even ten rupees at times — the total number of such daily offerings mounting to a high figure. But this interfering with his work, the visitors have latterly not been allowed to see him in his room. They are now being turned back from the very entrance passage of the Ashram.

*26th October :*

Since night before last, there has been a sudden spell of cold weather, and I caught a slight cold. Devadas coming to know of it, gave me tea and quinine and I have got rid of the cold. Of late, attacks of fever have been very frequent here. The fever looks very much like malaria. There is a resident doctor in the Ashram with whom Mahatmaji is found frequently engaged in

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\* The eleventh day of a lunar fortnight when fasting is enjoined on Hindus.

discussing the causes of the outbreak. How could malaria have found entrance into a place so scrupulously clean and well-kept as this? The tea and the quinine have heated my brain, and I did not have good sleep last night. Nevertheless, there has been no break in my routine of work. I got up at three as usual, and before it was four had finished my other duties like sweeping the floor of Mahatmaji's room, arranging the carpet for Mahatmaji, etc. At Delhi we shall be the guests of Dr Ansari. I hear that there is a proposal to go to Mathura and Panipat after finishing Delhi, but so far there has been nothing settled with regard to our movements in the Punjab. The tour programme will be arranged after reaching Delhi.

I did a fairly good day's writing yesterday, but would Mahatmaji approve and accept the same? An Indian sojourner in England had written a long letter to Mahatmaji. Mahatmaji asked me to write out an answer and show it to him. He has passed the draft reply. Only he has scored out the word, "Mahatmaji", wherever I had to write it, and put in "Mr Gandhi" instead. In another place, I wrote, "India can remain within the Empire, if it is consistent with her dignity and self-respect." He has altered it into "India can remain with the British, if it is consistent with her dignity and self-respect." The writer's point is that Mahatmaji would do well to place the question of Indian Swaraj in the forefront of his movement, while the redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs should find a secondary place.

*31st October :*

Yesterday I had my hair cropped. The Gujarati barber has so used his skill that, I am told, I could no longer be recognized as a Bengali. Today is the New Year's Day for Gujarat. Among the Gujaratis the year comes to an end on the *Diwali* day. Amongst the Bengalis, on the *Bijaya* Day; and after the immersion in the river of the goddess Durga after a three days' worship, there is the custom of meeting friends and relatives, and making obeisance to elders. A similar custom is observed here in Gujarat on the Gujarati New Year's Day, when the

Gujaratis meet friends and salute elders. Yesterday I had planned that this morning I should be the first to approach Mahatmaji, and make my New Year's salutation to him. I rose as usual at the appointed hour, and as on other days, I did my morning duties of sweeping the door, and arranging the carpet for Mahatmaji ; so that when he rose at 4, I was there before him. Yet I felt too shy to offer him my salutation. Then after the prayers when he came back to his room, group after group of Ashram people came and rendered their obeisances to him. After they had left, and there was nobody else in the room, I made bold to approach him and made my obeisance by touching my forehead to the floor, which however was rather clumsily done. He looked up to see me, but without a word I slipped away from his presence.

Among the newspaper-cuttings that Shri Mukerji has sent me is one describing the panic in the Manchester piecegoods market caused by the effects of the non-cooperation movement. Last night I read out the cutting to Mahatmaji, and when I had finished, he said with a smile on his lips, "Yes, friend, there need be no fear. Everything will shape itself all right in the end." Another cutting sent by Shri Mukerji is from the *Servant* newspaper of Calcutta. I have given it to him to read, and I am sure he will read it with pleasure. It contains an expression of the great chemist Dr Roy's views on the spinning-wheel. Dr Roy's views have undergone a complete change, he being now in favour of the wheel. A long letter from him to Mahatmaji has reached here. On the top of it I find written in big characters the word *Confidential*.

This morning about nine, two English gentlemen accompanied by two English ladies came to visit Mahatmaji ; but as it is Monday today, his day of silence, he could not talk to them. It fell to me to show them round the Ashram. The ladies were very much interested in the spinning-wheels at work. I took advantage of the occasion to suggest to them that they might as well set about spinning on their own account. This set them laughing.

The charge of Mahatmaji's English correspondence has been slowly passing into my hands, and as a result my duties have been getting heavier. My routine of work nowadays may be roughly given as follows: I rise at 3, and perform my own devotions and other duties. At 3-45 a.m., I go to sweep Mahatmaji's room, and arrange the carpet for him to sit on, after which I repair to the prayer-grounds to lay down *khaddar* sheets for the congregation to sit on, and arrange a special seat there for Mahatmaji. From 4-45 to 6 a.m. is the Ashram prayer, after which I have to get ready Mahatmaji's breakfast which consists of goat's milk and peeled fruits. He takes it every morning at 6-30 a.m. After breakfast he is usually free and alone, and I take the opportunity to have instructions from him as regards correspondence and other necessary matters. In case he has visitors after breakfast, I go and take my own breakfast. Then up till 8-30 a.m. I attend to Mahatmaji's office correspondence. From 8-30 to 9-30 a.m. I do odd jobs for the kitchen, after which I have to attend to the numerous telegrams which are delivered about this time. I sit near him, and write out the replies as dictated by him. Between 11 and 11-30 a.m., I take my principal meal, while Mahatmaji does his daily spinning for half an hour. At 11-30 a.m. I go and get hot water etc. for his bath. At 12 noon, he takes his midday meal. As at breakfast, so also now, he drinks about a pint and a half of goat's milk (warmed) and takes some fruits. But now in addition to the above, he takes some five or six pieces of *bhakari* (a style of Gujarati bread) fried in *ghee* (melted butter) prepared from goat's milk. After the midday meal Mahatmaji reads newspapers for half an hour, and at 1-30 he takes a nap. In the meantime the post has arrived and I am engaged in sorting the letters. As soon as he is up, he puts me the question, "How long have I slept?" — He goes to sleep for some 30 to 40 minutes, and when I tell him how long, he would exclaim, "So long". From 3 to 3-30 p.m. I remain busy with the newspapers, hurriedly looking over the news. I have to tell him every day the news of the Moplah outbreak in Malabar as given in the

daily *Hindu* of Madras. Then I have to give him orally the substance of the longer letters as well as of the "Reports" (from the Congress Provincial Centres) which have come by the day's post. Then I take away with me the letters whose replies he asks me to write. This goes on till 5 or 5-30 p.m. But during the whole afternoon while Mahatmaji would be thus busily engaged, crowds of common people anxious to have a *darshan* (i.e., auspicious sight) of Mahatmaji and make their salutation, would be coming in groups, filling Mahatmaji's room. He takes his evening meal at six, a little before sundown. At seven the prayer-meeting begins. After prayers many people come to see Mahatmaji, but he takes care to dispose of them quickly enough, and about eight he motors to the city. After he has left I begin arranging his papers. As I have to get up at three in the morning, I go to bed before nine, Ba and Devadas keeping awake to attend to Mahatmaji when he returns.\*

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE BOMBAY RIOTS — I

We arrived in Bombay early in the morning of the 17th November. The sun was shining in a clear sky. The four quarters were resplendent with his rays, and the whole city lay smiling under the bright canopy of heaven. As we drove from the station to our quarters, nothing unusual met our eyes. The old familiar sights were there, and these were all. But now on this very day, the Prince of Wales was to set foot on India's soil. Elaborate preparations had accordingly been made, and entertainments of all sorts had been arranged by the authorities to ensure for the Prince a fitting welcome. The provision on a lavish scale of popular attractions and festivities at a time when

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\* At this point in the original there is a long description of the meeting of the All-India Congress Working Committee at Delhi, followed by a five-day tour to Lahore. Thence they returned to the Ashram, and after a brief stay there proceeded to Bombay.

pain and affliction like an iron dart had entered into the very heart of India's body politic struck me as evidence of an utter insensibility to the feelings of the people. Toys are put into the hands of children to divert them, so that they may not cry out while suffering. So also at this critical juncture in the history of India, India's children were sought to be soothed and diverted from their cries by a piece of political legerdemain which consisted in bringing to India's shores His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, and providing all manner of shows, festivities and entertainments in celebration of the event. How else is it possible to account for the strange fact that the Prince was brought over to India during a time of the greatest stress and when discontent and revolution were stalking across the land. The Congress authorities were able to see through the deep political game which the Government were determined on playing, and therefore they advised an all-India *hartal*\* on the very day of the Prince's landing (17th November). The prevailing conflict between the official and popular points of view got accentuated and indeed assumed fearful proportions through this question of the boycott of the Prince's visit. In order that the Bombay people might not fall into the Government trap, the Bombay leaders had arranged for a mass-meeting under the presidency of Mahatmaji to be held at the other extremity of the city at the very time when the Prince was to land. In the meanwhile, the previous evening a score of Congress volunteers had been put under arrest on a charge of circulating the proclamation about the *hartal*, and all the printed copies of notices over the names of the Congress leaders for distribution among the public kept in the Swaraj Sabha office had been surreptitiously got hold of and secretly removed.

But all these efforts on the part of the Government to put a stop to the *hartal* went for nothing. The vast body of the general population boycotted the official demonstration in favour of the Prince, only the Europeans, the

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\*It means a voluntary cessation of all outside activities for purposes of demonstration of a deep public feeling.



Eurasians, and the Parsis joining in it. On the other hand, the mass meeting on the grounds adjoining the Elphinstone Mills over which Mahatmaji was to preside presented one vast sea of heads. Mahatmaji proceeded to the meeting after having taken some rest at his lodging. His address was devoted to explaining the absolute need of keeping the peace and observing non-violence. He said that he was going to launch civil disobedience at Bardoli very soon, when probably there would be firing on the people by the military. But whatever might happen to Bardoli, his one request to the people of Bombay was that they must under no circumstance allow themselves to be thrown off their balance. At this meeting there were people with foreign caps on, and people wearing foreign garments. The sight cut Mahatmaji to the quick. On one side was piled up quite a heap of foreign clothing which was to be consigned to the flames. Maulana Azad Sobhani, Pandit Nekiram and a few others having addressed the meeting, Mahatmaji went up to the pile and set it alight, and then left. While returning home from the meeting in the company of Shri Revashankar in another car, I noticed big parties of mill-hands in a state of great excitement returning in motor lorries from the meeting to the city proper. They were behaving boisterously, each party being under the guidance of a leader who was blowing a whistle and directing the course. The meeting having been dispersed, thousands upon thousands were returning home. While we were in the midst of this seething mass, I could not realize the situation as foreshadowed by the conduct of the mill-hands. But further on at another point our car was pelted with stones. Some of them fell into it. We stopped the car, when some half a dozen mill-hands began to lay violent hands on it with long poles. A gentleman dressed in handspun who was passing that way sharply reprimanded them and they dispersed. This was about 11-30 a.m. We returned home and forgot all about the incident. It was nothing more than mere pranks on the part of naughty youngsters of the locality, so we thought.

When, however, it was 1 p.m. Mahatmaji was apprised that a serious outbreak was in progress, and that disorderly scenes were being enacted in different parts of the city. In the company of a few associates, Mahatmaji left. Then about 5 in the afternoon, he had to go out again to stop further rioting. Returning home from his first visit, he narrated to us how all those who had been driving in motor cars had been pounced upon and subjected to cruelties and indignities, and that even people clad in handspun had not escaped such disgraceful treatment. The Parsis as a community having joined in the demonstration of welcome to the Prince, in defiance of the wishes of the general body of people, had been the target of attack. When they were returning home from the reception ceremony in honour of the Prince, the foreign caps and foreign garments on their persons were seized and consigned to the flames. Many Parsi gentlemen had also been assaulted, and the report was that one or two Parsi ladies had also been hurt. Many liquor shops had been smashed, and one motor car and two tramcars had also been burnt down. A police station and another building had been set on fire and given over to the flames. Four policemen had been beaten to death by *lathis* (long poles) and two more had sustained such severe injuries that there was little hope of their surviving. The last two had been lying prostrate on the earth on the highway when Mahatmaji arrived and beheld the heart-rending scene. A huge crowd had gathered and there was terrible noise and confusion all around. When they saw Mahatmaji in their midst, they gave themselves up to frenzied demonstrations and began to shout '*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*' (Victory to Mahatma Gandhi). He reproved them and ordered them off. Sprinkling water on the face of the policemen he remained there for some time nursing them. Then after, having made arrangements for their removal to the hospital he left. From every part of the city reports of frightful excesses, of murder, of rioting continued to pour in till ten in the night. Mahatmaji had been an eyewitness of such dreadful scenes and the agony which he suffered is beyond

description. Thrown into a state of utter despondency, he began to indulge in such words of grief and bitter self-reproach as would melt even the stoniest hearted amongst men. He kept awake till one in the morning pouring out in this manner his deepest feelings. Weighed down by grief and remorse, he went on recalling the high hopes with which he had been directing the movement. He had been hoping that by the eighth of December, he should be in a position to place before the Government his final terms. But alas! those hopes had now all vanished into thin air. And for this who else was responsible than his own self? That very morning when he had been addressing the meeting and expressing his sorrow that some amongst his hearers should be wearing foreign caps, he had seen those caps being forcibly removed by others; and on some previous occasions also, he had been a witness of similar acts and yet he had failed to protest against them. The spirit of intolerance had gone on increasing unchecked, and had culminated in this huge conflagration at Bombay. Why from the very first had he not had the sagacity to stand up against every such exhibition of intolerance and violence—such was the charge he went on repeating against himself in tones of bitter despair and self-reproach.

But his despair was intensified by reason of another circumstance. Mahatmaji had come to believe that there were directing brains behind this outbreak of mob-violence. He had noticed at particular places some people of the class that usually attended public meetings taking the lead and directing the mob. Further, at one particular point, Mahatmaji had appealed to the rioters to disperse and return to their homes, but they had refused to listen to him. Mahatmaji's belief was that they were being controlled by outside agencies. The incident had made the deepest impression upon his mind. If at Bombay mob-violence was being engineered and directed by skilled hands from behind, then the launching of civil disobedience at Bardoli must remain a chimera. Listening to these words of pain and despair from the lips of Mahatmaji,

the picture of India's luckless future and of her misery stood out in bold relief before the mind's eye, and one had to struggle with oneself to preserve one's mental equanimity.

Mahatmaji gave expression to his thankfulness to God for His having opened his eyes and saved the situation. "The Lord has saved me from a dire calamity. I was most unwilling to come to Bombay ; but God wanted me to see the sights that I have seen, and dragged me to Bombay. If today I had stayed at Ahmedabad I might have easily belittled the happenings in Bombay and paid little heed to them. But the terrible scenes that have been enacted before my own eyes could not possibly be put aside, and who knows what further disasters would await us if at this moment civil disobedience should be resorted to at Bardoli."

That very night Mahatmaji cancelled his original programme of visiting Surat and Bardoli and sent his son Devadas to Surat to carry the news about the Bombay riots. He also sent word through Devadas that all preparations for civil disobedience must be suspended. When it was past eleven at night a party of enthusiastic young men and volunteers came and reported that for all practical purposes the city was quiet. But that did not pacify Mahatmaji who continued to remain in a state of anxious suspense about the immediate future.

The next morning (18th November), the sun rose lighting up every quarter of the heavens with a tranquil splendour and all Nature put on a smiling countenance. But those smiles of Nature, alas ! what are they ? Thou, Goddess, do thou cease to spread before man the net of thy enchanting beauty, which makes him thy dupe ! For within the folds of thy external charms lie concealed the coils of thy cruelty and inhumanity. Why else should thy lovely hills and dales, thy sweet murmuring brooks and springs, and thy forests of vast surpassing grandeur nurse in their breasts wild ferocious beasts and animals ? So also within the bosom of that day, lit up with effulgent rays falling from a clear, cloudless sky, lay quietly hid a

dark mass of barbarities and inhumanities such as few could have conceived.

From the reports that had been reaching us since the morning it seemed as though the virulence of this epidemic of madness had spent itself out, and that the general body of the population been restored to sanity and would resume the normal course of their respective daily duties. But it was the lull before the storm, the lull that precedes the final cataclysmic storm, when the winds of destruction are let loose. Of this not one single person had the remotest idea at the time. Reaction follows action, as a matter of course. On the previous day, the Parsi, the Eurasian and the Jewish residents of Bombay had to meet a most unexpected attack. But today they were adequately armed and frantic with rage, were thirsting for revenge.

Meanwhile, the non-co-operators on the local Congress Committees had been roused to action, and parties of Congress volunteers and Congress leaders were seen going about, visiting the excited mobs in different parts of the city and trying to pacify them. The day previous, the event had come as a bolt from the blue and had stunned everybody and no adequate steps could be taken to combat it. But today there was no remissness anywhere. Every worker was up and doing and determined that the disorders should come to a speedy end, even if he had to lay down his life in the attempt. At half-past nine in the morning, Shri Moazzam Ali, brother-in-law of Maulana Mahommed Ali, came with two fellow-workers from the Khilafat Committee's office to inform Mahatmaji that they had gone about inspecting the different quarters of the city and that they had found peace everywhere. Similarly also others came and saw Mahatmaji, and gave him reassuring news, seeking to alleviate his misery and anxiety. But while all this was going on and Shri Moazzam Ali had not left, we were rung up, and the disquieting news came that the mill-hands at Parel were holding up tramcars and that an attack on the Parsi community in the neighbourhood was apprehended. Our informant on the telephone piteously implored Mahatmaji's help fearing that unless

immediate steps were taken to bring the mill-hands under control, rioting, robbery and arson would in all likelihood ensue. Mahatmaji was then busy writing an article under the caption, "A Deep Stain", for *Young India* in which he was narrating the previous day's incidents of which he had been an eyewitness. He, therefore, deputed Maulana Azad Sobhani and Shri Moazzam Ali, with half a dozen young men to go and visit Parel immediately, with instructions to try and prevent a riot, promising to go to the spot himself as soon as the article was finished.

After the Maulana Saheb had left with his party, we had to spend every moment of our time in a state of the greatest suspense awaiting news as to what happened next. Half an hour had not passed when I saw Shri Moazzam Ali with only two of his assistants returning in a 'victoria'. But what a sight! They were all bleeding, blood streaming profusely from all parts of their bodies. But where was the car? Where, again, was Maulana Azad Sobhani? What had become of the other three companions? Shri Moazzam Ali's wounds were less serious and he could give a connected account of what had happened. A party composed of Parsis, Eurasians and Jews had attacked them, smashed their car, and brutally assaulted them. He could not tell whether after all Maulana Azad Sobhani and the three others were still alive, or what had become of them. The two Khilafat workers were too severely wounded to be able to state anything coherently. They only pointed to their broken heads, and wounds all over their bodies; and then with choked breath went on repeating the cry, like one suffering from delirium, "We also have given of our blood! We also have given of our blood!" We were already engaged in rendering first aid to this party of three; but shortly after, one by one, the other young men arrived, but in what horrible condition! One of them had a broken nasal bone and other lacerated wounds all over his body, and there was danger of his succumbing. The other two could boast of graceful, healthy bodies, but they had been subjected to such terrible assaults, that with lacerated wounds all over them

they lay crumpled up on the floor like inert lumps of flesh. The cry of pain which they involuntarily uttered as soon as they came in sight of Mahatmaji pierced his heart like an arrow, and he sat by their side consoling and comforting them. In the meantime arrangements for their proper nursing and treatment were proceeded with.

We had not, however, had any news of the fate of Maulana Azad Sobhani, and our apprehensions and anxiety on his score went on increasing every moment. But who would now care to go out alone along the highways to court certain death? Mahatmaji said not a word but sat in his own seat, composed and silent, and went on writing his article. He wrote :

"I am writing this in the midst of six Hindu and Mussalman workers who have just come in with broken heads and bleeding ; and one with a broken nasal bone and other lacerated wounds, and in danger of losing his life. They went to Parel led by Moulana Azad Sobhani and Moazzam Ali to pacify the mill-hands, who, it was reported, were holding up tramcars there. The workers, however, were unable to proceed to their destination. They returned with their bleeding wounds to speak for themselves."

And he continued : "Thus the hope of reviving mass civil disobedience has once more been dashed, in my opinion, to pieces. The atmosphere for mass civil disobedience is absent. It is not enough that such an atmosphere is to be found in Bardoli and therefore it may go on side by side with the violence in Bombay. This is impossible."

As originally settled, the Working Committee was to meet at Surat on 22nd November, 1921, and arrive at a final decision on the question of civil disobedience. Bardoli was to be given the permission to launch civil disobedience. In the course of his article, "A Deep Stain", Mahatmaji, therefore, explained his own position in the light of the altered circumstances. His opinion was that the Working Committee could not ignore the altered situation, but must consider in the light thereof whether mass civil disobedience could at all be encouraged until

they had obtained complete control over the masses. Mahatmaji had himself deliberately come to the conclusion that mass civil disobedience could not be started at least for some time to come. He confessed to his inability to conduct civil disobedience to a successful issue unless and until a completely non-violent atmosphere had come into being. He was sorry for the confession. It was a humiliating confession to make of his incapacity ; but he was certain that he would appear more pleasing to his Maker by proclaiming what he was, instead of appearing to be what he was not. He emphasized that he would have nothing to do with the organized violence of the Government. But he could have still less to do with the unorganized violence of the people. He would prefer to be crushed between the two while engaged in a relentless war with both.

## CHAPTER XX

## THE BOMBAY RIOTS — II

For the benefit of the reader is reproduced below the whole of Mahatmaji's article entitled " A Deep Stain " to which reference has already been made in the last chapter. It would be seen that for the launching of civil disobedience *en masse*, the claims of non-violence and peace are absolute and can never be ignored. Unfortunately, however, this part of Mahatmaji's teaching was not always and everywhere welcomed or appreciated or stressed by the general body of workers and leaders to the extent that was necessary. Hence the violent scenes enacted at Bombay. The article by Mahatmaji, it is hoped, will enable the reader to have a more thorough insight into and grasp of his fundamental teaching.

"The reputation of Bombay, the hope of my dreams, was being stained yesterday even whilst in my simplicity I was congratulating the citizens upon their non-violence in the face of provocation. For the volunteers with their captain were arrested during the previous night for pasting posters under authority on private property. The posters advised the people



to boycott the welcome to the Prince. They were destroyed. The Swaraj Sabha's office was mysteriously entered and the unused posters, so far as I am aware not declared unlawful, were also removed. The Prince's visit itself and the circumstances attending the ceremonials arranged and public money wasted for the manufacture of a welcome to His Royal Highness constituted an unbearable provocation. And yet Bombay had remained self-restrained. This, I thought, was a matter for congratulation. The burning of the pile of foreign cloth was an eloquent counter-demonstration to the interested official demonstration.

"Little did I know that at the very time that the Prince was passing through the decorated route and the pile of foreign cloth was burning, in another part of the city the mill-hands were in criminal disobedience of the wishes of their masters emptying them, first one and then the others, by force; that a swelling mob was molesting peaceful passengers in the tramcars and holding up the tram traffic; that it was forcibly depriving those that were wearing foreign caps of their head-dresses and pelting inoffensive Europeans. As the day went up, the fury of the mob now intoxicated with its initial success rose also. They burnt tramcars and a motor, smashed liquor shops and burnt two.

"I heard of the outbreak at about 1 o'clock. I motored with some friends to the area of disturbance and heard the most painful and the most humiliating story of molestation of Parsi sisters. Some few were assaulted, and even had their *sadris* torn from them. No one from among a crowd of over fifteen hundred who had surrounded my car denied the charge, as a Parsi with hot rage and quivering lips was with the greatest deliberation relating the story. An elderly Parsi gentleman said, "Please save us from this mob rule." This news of the rough handling of Parsi sisters pierced me like a dart. I felt that my sisters or daughters had been hurt by a violent mob! Yes, some Parsis had joined the welcome. They had a right to hold their own view, free of molestation. There can be no coercion in Swaraj. The Moplah fanatic who forcibly converts a Hindu believes that he is acquiring religious merit. A non-co-operator or his associate who uses coercion has no apology whatsoever for his criminality.

"As I reached the 'Two Tanks', I found a liquor shop smashed, two policemen badly wounded and lying unconscious on cots, without anybody caring for them. I alighted. Immediately the crowd surrounded me and yelled *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*. That sound usually grates on my ears, but it has grated never so much as it did yesterday when the crowd unmindful of the two sick brethren choked me with the shout at the top of their voices. I rebuked them and they were silent. Water was

brought for the two wounded men. I requested two of my companions and some from the crowd to take the dying policemen to the hospital. I proceeded then to the scene a little further up where I saw a fire rising. There were two tramcars which were burnt by the crowd. On returning, I witnessed a burning motor car. I appealed to the crowd to disperse, told them that they had damaged the cause of the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj. I returned sick at heart and in a chastened mood.

"At about five, a few brave Sindhi young men came to report that in Bhindi Bazaar the crowd was molesting every passer-by who had a foreign cap on and even seriously beating him, if he refused to give up his cap. A brave old Parsi who defied the crowd and would not give up his *pugree* was badly handled. Maulana Azad Sobhani and I went to Bhindi Bazaar and reasoned with the crowd, told them that they were denying their religion by hurting innocent men. The crowd made a show of dispersing. The police were there but they were exceedingly restrained. We went further and, on retracing our steps, found to our horror a liquor shop on fire. Even the fire brigade was obstructed in its work. Thanks to the efforts of Pandit Nekiram Sharma and others the inmates of the shop were able to come out.

"The crowd did not consist of hooligans only or boys. It was not an unintelligent crowd. They were not all mill-hands. It was essentially a mixed crowd unprepared and unwilling to listen to anybody. For the moment it had lost its head. And it was not a crowd but several crowds numbering in all not less than twenty thousand. It was bent upon mischief and destruction.

"I heard that there was firing resulting in deaths and that in the Anglo-Indian quarters every one came in for hard beating, if he did not put off his *khadi* cap or shirt. I heard that many were seriously injured. I am writing this in the midst of six Hindu and Mussalman workers who have just come in with broken heads and bleeding and one with a broken nasal bone and other lacerated wounds and in danger of losing his life. They went to Parel led by Maulanas Azad Sobhani and Mozzam Ali to pacify the mill-hands, who, it was reported, were holding up tramcars there. The workers, however, were unable to proceed to their destination. They returned with their bleeding wounds to speak for themselves.

"Thus the hope of reviving mass civil disobedience has once more in my opinion been dashed to pieces. The atmosphere for mass civil disobedience is absent. It is not enough to say that such an atmosphere is to be found in Bardoli, and, therefore, it may go on side by side with the violence in Bombay. This is impossible. Neither Bardoli nor Bombay can be treated as a

separate, unconnected unit. They are parts of one great indivisible whole. It was possible to isolate Malabar. It was also possible to disregard Malegaon. But it is not possible to ignore Bombay.

"Non-co-operators cannot escape liability. It is true that non-co-operators were ceaselessly remonstrating everywhere with the people at considerable risk to themselves, to arrest or stop the mischief and that they are responsible for saving many precious lives. But that is not enough for launching out on civil disobedience or to discharge us from liability for the violence that has taken place. We claim to have established a peaceful atmosphere, i.e., to have attained by our non-violence sufficient control over the people to keep their violence under check. We have failed when we ought to have succeeded. For yesterday was a day of our trial. We were under our pledge bound to protect the person of the Prince from any harm or insult. And we broke that pledge, inasmuch as any one of us insulted or injured a single European or any other who took part in the welcome to the Prince. They were as much entitled to take part in the welcome as we were to refrain. Nor can I shirk my own personal responsibility. I am more instrumental than any other in bringing into being the spirit of revolt. I find myself not fully capable of controlling and disciplining that spirit. I must do penance for it. For me the struggle is essentially religious. I believe in fasting and prayer, and I propose henceforth to observe every Monday a twenty-four hour fast till Swaraj is attained.

"The Working Committee will have to devote its attention to the situation and consider in the light thereof whether mass civil disobedience can be at all encouraged until we have obtained complete control over the masses. I have personally come deliberately to the conclusion that mass civil disobedience cannot be started for the present. I confess my inability to conduct a campaign of civil disobedience to a successful issue unless a completely non-violent spirit is generated among the people. I am sorry for the conclusion. It is a humiliating confession of my incapacity; but I know that I shall appear more pleasing to my Maker by being what I am, instead of appearing to be what I am not. If I can have nothing to do with the organized violence of the Government, I can have less to do with the unorganized violence of the people. I would prefer to be crushed between the two."

## CHAPTER XXI

## HOW TO RESTORE PEACE

Less than three hours after, Maulana Azad Sobhani returned safe and sound. He had not had a scratch on his body, a fact at which we felt surprised. He said that the Parsi and the Eurasian rioters singled out those who wore white *khaddar* caps (Gandhi caps), and brutally assaulted them. The Maulana Saheb escaped as he had no cap on, and in the confusion of the *melee* he quietly got inside a wrecked tramcar and nobody saw him. Ever since Mahatmaji had begun putting on his loin-cloth dress, Maulana Saheb had discarded his cap, except at the time of his prayers, as such wearing is enjoined by Muslim law.

God was particularly merciful that day, for if only Mahatmaji had started for Parel, instead of remaining at home engaged in the writing of his article, and if in that event, he had received any injuries at the hands of the Parsi and European youths, then not merely in Bombay, but the whole country over, rivers of blood would have flowed, and none could have prevented the same.

Even as the Parsis and Eurasians had banded themselves together to molest and assault innocent passers-by clad in *khaddar*, so also the Hindus and the Mussalmans among the lower classes roused to fury began to organize themselves into bands and invaded the Parsi quarters and gave themselves up to pillage, incendiarism and other frightful excesses. They thus brought disgrace upon their respective religions and besmirched the fair fame of India. I would not defile the pages of this book with a recital of these unfortunate and horrible outbursts of passion. The masses of Bombay — Hindus and Mussalmans on one side, and Parsis and Christians on the other — seemed to have no other thought for the moment than that of attacking and counter-attacking and doing all possible injury to each

other. They had been helplessly caught in a mighty whirlpool of passion out of which it was impossible for them to extricate themselves. The violence of the Hindu and the Mussalman aggressors had been followed by the retaliatory violence of the Parsis and the Christians ; but this only roused to added fury the original aggressors and so there seemed to be no way out of this never-ending circle of violence and of passion.

The Parsis having applied to the Government for guns and revolvers for self-defence and having obtained them set about attacking different quarters of the city killing and wounding a considerable number of Hindus and Mussalmans. These latter had no weapons besides big poles and brick-bats, but they had the strength of numbers, and here and there they forced their entrance into Parsi homes and committed barbarities. It was also found that when the rioting was on, the police, although at hand, did not choose to exert themselves to put a stop to it. On the other hand, in some cases at least, they were found to have openly sided with the Parsis and aided them. Thus, at midday in broad daylight, a band of armed Parsi youths attacked and smashed the well-known confectioner, Shri Govindji Vasanji's shop, and having brutally assaulted him went away leaving him half dead. And all this took place in front of the police station of the locality. We were apprehensive lest a similar party of Parsi youths mad with rage should force their way into Mahatmaji's residence and make an attempt on his life. A guard of volunteers was therefore posted at the very entrance of our house. So also we were on our watch lest there should be firing from the roofs of contiguous buildings. Nothing may legitimately be said against the Parsis who were thirsting for revenge. Firstly, they had not started the game ; they were the victims of Hindu and Muslim aggression. Then their women had been insulted and ill-treated. In the circumstances, it was no wonder that the spirit of vengeance and fury should have possessed them. Lastly, and the worst feature of it all was that in the course of the rioting an act of unprecedented sacrilege had been

done to the Parsis. More than a thousand years ago, the Parsis had left their native homes in Persia to seek an asylum in India for the preservation of their own religion against the attacks of the Muslim invaders of Persia. Through all these centuries the Parsis had been living in India in peaceful enjoyment of their religious liberties and no outsider had hitherto dared to enter their temples and destroy their sanctity by acts of sacrilege. But on the present occasion a Hindu-Muslim band of rioters dared to force their way into an *Atash Behram* or "Fire-Temple", and extinguished the sacred fire. Such fire, as is well known, is kept perpetually burning, for worship by Parsi devotees on whom fire-worship is enjoined by their religion. Could anything more distressing and mortifying to the Parsis be imagined? A mild-mannered Parsi gentleman well advanced in years, while referring to this incident said that the Parsi community as a body were quite prepared to be destroyed wholesale fighting for the preservation of the sanctity of their religion.

The situation in which Mahatmaji thus found himself was indeed depressing and most painful. What could he possibly do under the circumstances? Letters had begun to pour in upon him from all quarters, letters full of harrowing details and cries of distress; letters, also, full of foulest abuse, and invoking curses on his devoted head. Among the writers of these letters were people who had been violently assaulted; those also who had been robbed or despoiled of their possessions; others again who had lost their sons or daughters by the murderous acts of the infuriated mob. Mahatmaji would read out these letters to all who were constantly by his side. The woes and sufferings of these men and women pierced his heart like a shaft. Already, finding that the riots were not going to end soon, he had ceased taking any food; while in his article he had also announced that he must undergo a fast for twenty-four hours every Monday. But the problem which was racking him was how to check the rising flames of anarchy now slowly enveloping every quarter of the city. The whole of the day was passed under the strain of

incessant toil and agonizing thoughts, till at last towards evening he felt exhausted and laid himself down to rest, asking me to rub oil on his forehead and his back. But even so, a minute's rest was denied to him. For Shri Jamnadas Dwarkadas came in just then, and was granted a prolonged interview lasting till ten; and when he went to bed, it was 10-30. He was extremely weak and tired, and so I thought I must be with him in his room for the night, and I accordingly laid myself down there near him. When it was half-past three in the morning, all on a sudden, Mahatmaji woke up and turned the switch on. I was awakened and he immediately asked for pencil and paper and began writing out something in hot haste. It was quickly done, and I was directed to make three clean copies. Shri Mathurdas (Trikamji), Congress worker of Bombay, was there. He was asked to read out the original to me and I was to make the copies. Mahatmaji forbade all remarks, comments, objections or queries relating to the document. The words came from him in such a solemn tone that one felt awed and it was not possible for even the most forward amongst us to utter even a single word by way of comment. The following is the full text of what he wrote :

"Men and women of Bombay,

"It is not possible to describe to you the agony I have suffered during the past two days. I am writing this now at 3-30 a.m in perfect peace. After two hours' prayer and meditation, I have found it.

"I must refuse to eat or drink anything but water, till the Hindus and the Mussalmans of Bombay have made peace with the Parsis, the Christians and the Jews, and till the non-co-operators have made peace with the co-operators.

"The Swaraj that I have witnessed during the last two days has stunk in my nostrils. Hindu-Muslim unity has been a menace to the handful of Parsis, Christians and Jews. The non-violence of non-co-operators has been worse than the violence of co-operators. For, with non-violence on our lips, we have terrorized those who have differed from us, and in so doing we have denied our God. There is only one God for us all, whether we find Him through the Koran, the *Zend Avesta*, the Talmud, or the *Gita*. And He is God of Truth and Love. I have no interest in living, save for proving this faith in me. I cannot hate an Englishman

or any one else. I have spoken and written much against his institutions, especially the one he has set up in India. I shall continue to do so if I live. But you must not mistake my condemnation of the system for that of the man. My religion requires me to love him as I love myself. I would deny God if I did not attempt to prove it at this critical moment.

"And the Parsis? I have meant every word I have said about them. Hindus and Mussalmans will be unworthy of freedom if they do not defend them and their honour with their lives. They have only recently proved their liberality and friendship. The Mussalmans are especially beholden to them; for the Parsis have, compared to their numbers, given more than they themselves to the Khilafat funds. Unless Hindus and Mussalmans have expressed full and free repentance, I cannot face again the appealing eyes of Parsi men and women that I saw on the 17th instant as I passed through them. Nor can I face Andrews when he returns from East Africa, if we have done no reparation to the Indian Christians whom we are bound to protect as our own brothers and sisters. We may not think of what they or the Parsis in self-defence or by way of reprisals have done to some of us.

"You can see quite clearly that I must do the utmost reparation to this handful of men and women who have been the victims of forces that have come into being largely through my instrumentality. I invite every Hindu and Mussalman to do likewise. But I do not want any one to fast. Fasting is only good when it comes in answer to prayer and as a felt yearning of the soul. I invite every Hindu and Mussalman to retire to his home, ask God for forgiveness, and to befriend the injured communities from the bottom of his heart.

"I invite my fellow-workers not to waste a single word of sympathy for me. I need or deserve none. But I invite them to make a ceaseless effort to regain control over the turbulent elements. This is a terribly true struggle. There is no room for sham or humbug in it. Before we can make any further progress with our struggle, we must cleanse our hearts.

"One special word to my Mussalman brothers. I have approached the Khilafat as a sacred cause. I have striven for Hindu-Muslim unity, because India cannot live free without it, and because we would both deny God if we considered one another as natural enemies. I have thrown myself into the arms of the Ali Brothers, because I believe them to be true and God-fearing men. The Mussalmans have to my knowledge played the leading part during the two days of carnage. It has deeply hurt me. I ask every Mussalman worker to rise to his full height, to realize his duty to his faith and see that the carnage stops.



"May God bless every one of us with wisdom and courage to do the right at any cost.

19th November, 1921.

I am,  
Your servant,  
M. K. GANDHI "

This appeal was printed in four languages, English, Gujarati, Marathi and Urdu, and distributed broadcast throughout the city on the 19th November, which was the third day of the disturbances. But even though the flood tide has ceased to flow, it does not stop all at once. So also in this case. Mahatmaji had sounded his trumpet call to peace. But it took some time to rouse the Bombay populace to a sense of their duty. At midday a volunteer came and delivered to Mahatmaji a written message from Shrimati Sarojini Naidu who was then at a distance of only a ten minutes' walk from Mahatmaji's quarters. It ran thus : " Please send a surgeon immediately, men dead, dying and wounded are lying on the road." The rioters on both sides, now grown equally furious, were dealing deadly blows at each other, and there was no way of estimating the numbers of the wounded and the killed. Reports of murderous outbreaks and affrays were coming every minute on the telephone, from all quarters of the city. One had, in fact, to sit always at the telephone with the receiver in his ear. On the other hand, we could not send out any message of our own on the 'phone. The Head Office would not give us the connection. Maulana Azad Sobhani Saheb's personal assistant, Anwar, ventured forth but came back after a while, seeing the dead bodies of two young men in *khaddar* dress lying on the road. They had been shot dead by police, and were lying in a pool of blood. The spot was dyed red with their bright, fresh blood. Anwar had no *khaddar* cap on and so escaped being assaulted. But the shock of the sight had unnerved him and he sat musing in a corner of the room all by himself. Then came the report that some thousands of *Mawali* hooligans had invaded a neighbouring quarter inhabited by Parsis and had set fire to a number of houses. The moment the news came, Mahatmaji sent Shri Khatri,

one of the secretaries of the Central Khilafat Committee, to the scene of disturbance. Shri Khatri wielded very great influence over the Mussalmans of Bombay, and if he had not been confined to bed through illness during the first two days, the disturbances would not have attained such huge dimensions. Shri Chhotani, the President of the Khilafat Committee, had also been absent from Bombay at the time, which was unfortunate. Shri Khatri, however, was able to prevail with the *Mawalīs*. He soon came back bringing with him their leader, who at the very sight of Mahatmaji began to shed tears while uttering the words, "Master, who would dare to lay hands on your person, so long as there is life left in our bodies?" We came to learn from this man that the city was full of the rumour that Mahatmaji had been assaulted by the Parsis, and that the *Mawalīs* had attacked a Parsi quarter to avenge the wrong. Mahatmaji listened to him in silence, but as soon as he had ceased weeping, he addressed to him the following grave admonition: "Your words have given no pleasure to me. Your ways are not mine. Many a time I have been approached by Indian soldiers serving in the British army to give them permission to rise in mutiny against the Government. But far from giving them the permission, I have condemned them for the ways of violence which they proposed. I must tell you that you could never have my sympathy or support in any acts of brutality or violence." Then turning his face away from him he betook himself to his own work.

## CHAPTER XXII

## RESOLVED TO FAST AWAY LIFE

It was only two days that Devadas had left for Surat in obedience to Mahatmaji's directions, but today (19th November) he was called back to Bombay by wire. When Devadas returned, Mahatmaji gave out that Devadas had been brought back on purpose. He was to be sent out as a "sacrifice" for slaughter by the rioters, should a fresh outbreak occur in some neighbouring district.

The fast was on ; and yet Mahatmaji had not had a moment's leisure. It was impossible for any outsider to have a conception of the heavy strain of work to which at the time he was put unless with one's own eyes one saw him working. His body was thinning, and he was being reduced to a skeleton. Yet all the time he was surrounded by workers who had come to consult him as to how to put an end to the rioting ; while he on his part with equal enthusiasm was bending his whole energies to the task. To us at times it seemed as if physically he had gained in stamina because of the fast. He also would say, "I am feeling all the better for the fasting. I have been enjoying a spell of unbroken peace within. With the taking of nourishment one feels dull, inactive and inclined to sleep. No longer have I anything to do with easing nature or with sleep. Night and day, the whole of my time, without a break or pause, I am quite at rest within." Most of the time I would be near him, attending on him. The fact, however, was that he did not feel that any attention was specially needed. Sometimes when he wanted to leave his room, he would himself go out, tottering ; he was so weak, so I would feel somewhat nervous. Yet I could not call up courage to touch his person ; nor would he ask for any assistance. But there was one change which I noticed. Occasionally he would get irritated. But this irritation was

shown only in respect of those of us who were in attendance upon him. Thus he would give us just a little snubbing if we said anything irrelevant, or did anything foolish. One little incident may here be noted. One Parsi gentleman came and was holding forth on the enormities of the Eurasian rioters. He laid the whole blame of the riots on their shoulders. Warming up he went on to say, "The Eurasians are a hybrid race; they and they alone have to answer for everything." This was too much for Mahatmaji, and he burst out with—"Such be your Swaraj! With such feeling rankling in your breast, do you hope to win Swaraj! Today you will be accusing Eurasians of illegitimate birth. The next day, they will retort and say, 'Not we, but the Parsis are bastards.' I have had enough of such Swaraj, it stinks in my nostrils. Let me have no more of this hideous form of it." The Parsi gentleman quite abashed hung down his head and uttered not a word. He had, however, come to mitigate, if possible, Mahatmaji's sorrow and misery, and had thought that by laying the blame on the shoulders of the Eurasians, he would be able somewhat to mitigate Mahatmaji's mental anguish. But he had no idea that his was not the sort of character that could bear with patience indignities heaped upon others.

The riots with their inhumanities had proved too much for Mahatmaji. Today (19th November) in the course of conversation with those who were near about him, he would now and then let fall words which gave a clear indication that he was pining to leave his mortal frame. At three in the afternoon he called me to his side and in Hindi spoke out his mind as follows: "I cannot say for how many days more it will be possible for me to continue in this body. The mere cessation of this carnage would not be enough for me. So much only would not soothe my troubled spirits. For the disturbances could be brought to an end in no time if only we would invoke the aid of the military, who would shoot down the rioters and restore order. There is also another way. The warring factions may go on fighting till they could fight no longer

and are tired of mutual killing. That way, of course, peace of a sort might be established. But such peace is not what I have in view. The picture of peace I have before my mind's eye is something wholly different; and till that materializes, I am resolved not to break my fast. But the type of fraternal peace for which my soul is hankering seems under present circumstances to be wholly out of the range of practical politics. Therefore, as I was telling you, I do not know how many days more I am destined to live."

Then after a pause Mahatmajī said, "Notwithstanding my weakness I shall be in a condition to conduct *Young India* as well as I have been doing. But in the second week my strength will fail me. Even then I hope to be able to dictate to you some matter for the Press. I would, however, ask you to write to Satishbabu" (Shri Mukerji) "and tell him that it would be a help if he could send some matter for the second week. After that, if he should take charge of *Young India* I should be happy and feel relieved of all anxiety. He may do so either from Banaras where he is now; or from the Ashram, if he could make it convenient to come down. My belief is that he has got an insight into the fundamental principles of the present movement. The second week over, I think I shall lose all consciousness."

Finally he said, "Shall I write to him myself?" I replied, "You need not; it will do as well if I write."

## CHAPTER XXIII PEACE RESTORED

When the idea got hold of the minds of Mahatmaji's coadjutors that he had definitely resolved upon leaving his body, and that the fast had that object only in view, their feelings might better be imagined than described. Leaders like Shrimati Sarojini Naidu, Maulana Azad Sobhani, Shri Shankarlal Banker and Shri Bharucha lost no time in throwing themselves heart and soul into one mighty effort at peace. They hurried to wherever there were preparations for fighting, or rioting and carnage were in progress; and regardless of their lives they plunged into the very midst of infuriated mobs. Every one of them had to receive on his or her person hurts, but they were totally indifferent to what happened to them. They were resolved, come what might to themselves, to bring about the restoration of peace, in order that Mahatmaji's life might be spared. Maulana Azad Sobhani had gone out and been assaulted by a body of Parsis. The moment he returned, news reached us that rioting was being hatched by mill-hands in another part of the city. Straightway he left us to meet them and if possible prevent the rioting. About the Maulana Saheb's deep learning and erudition, we had not the slightest doubt; but up till the riots we had hardly imagined that he combined with them an equal measure of fearlessness and capacity for hard labour. The truth of the matter is that until we see a man confronting difficulties, we cannot truly measure his latent powers and real worth.

Once again, news reached our ears that a body of armed Parsis had surrounded Shri Shankarlal and had him in their grip; and that, in fact, there were no chances of his escaping with his life. We were all much perturbed, but Mahatmaji remained quite unaffected. The state of

torturing suspense in which we passed almost every minute of our time is indescribable. What was our relief when, by God's grace a short while after, we found Shri Shankarlal coming back amongst us, all smiles, with not a scratch on his body ! The Parsi rioters had indeed surrounded him and were about to fall upon him. So finding that death was certain, Shri Shankarlal made no efforts to save himself, but laid himself down on the earth prostrate and kept on crying out. That was the situation to which he was reduced and yet the rioters laid not a single violent hand on him, but after a time let him go scot-free. Shankarlal's grief and remorse knew no bounds on account of these riots. He it was that had sent telegram after telegram to Mahatmaji and had brought him down to Bombay, against Mahatmaji's own inclinations. And now, should Mahatmaji fast himself to death as a penance, how was it possible for Shankarlal to drag on a physical existence ? Once when Mahatmaji was all by himself, Shankarlal went up to him weeping and with clasped hands unbosomed himself thus : "Do thou have mercy on us, master ! Be not so cruel ! We also are resolved to lay down our lives in order that the riots may cease ! Do thou, therefore, have mercy on us and deign to take some nourishment to keep up your body." Mahatmaji uttered not a word in reply ; but with a stern look and shaking his head expressed his disapproval.

And what shall I say of Shrimati Sarojini Naidu's daring ? Time after time she would go out amongst the rioters in the different areas of disturbance ; and coming back each time, she would relate to Mahatmaji with appropriate postures and gestures her personal exploits, not forgetting to give a dramatic picture of the acts of cowardliness of which some others might have been guilty. Thus, she of them all could occasionally bring in a ray of smile on Mahatmaji's lips, even in the midst of all his grief and anxiety.

Lastly, about Shri Bharucha. His gentleness, his humility, his tender-heartedness were beyond compare. But his tirelessness surpassed everything. Driving his car

with the speed of an arrow, he would again and again make a tour of the whole city, visiting every affected area ; and would return to report to Mahatmaji as soon as he had finished one such tour. Thus he would be coming and going, now announcing, " Bhindi Bazar quiet " ; now " Paydhuni, quiet " ; now " Dhobitalav, quiet " ; now " Madanpura, quiet " ; and so on, and so on. And every time after breaking the news he would in all humility ask, " Any further orders, please ? " ; and would not go out, keep standing with clasped hands, awaiting orders. Mahatmaji would merely smile at him, and indicate to him by gesture that for him (Mahatmaji) there were no " orders " to give. And now, with all possible deference and with the utmost self-restraint, Shri Bharucha would take leave of Mahatmaji, drawing back step by step, and bowing low in right oriental style, as when retiring from the presence of a monarch ; and then he would hie away, to survey and note the state of things prevailing in the other parts of the city.

In the meantime ; Mahatmaji's appeal to the " Men and Women of Bombay ", which had been issued and distributed broadcast among the populace, seemed to have borne some fruit, as was evident from their attitude on the next succeeding day. For on that day since early morning, party after party of people were seen coming and assembling on the road in front of Mahatmaji's residence, the one prayer on their lips being, " Please to break your fast."

Resulting from the appeal, there was a joint conference of a large body of representatives of the Parsi, Mussalman and Hindu communities, which met that morning in Mahatmaji's room to consider the best means of restoring peace to the city. After much disputation and argumentation, it was finally resolved at Mahatmaji's suggestion that because the Parsis were numerically small and as a community weak, they should be given the authority to decide on the conditions of peace, which the Hindus and Muslims should accept without further discussion and without demur. Thus did Mahatmaji lay the



whole burden of judging and determining the final terms of peace on the shoulders of the Parsis. So far as the Hindus were concerned they had no special objection to Mahatmaji's suggestion, but the Muslim representatives did not seem quite prepared to accept it. Mahatmaji had made the Mussalmans primarily responsible for the disturbances, and this had already given rise to some little disaffection in their ranks. However in the end Mahatmaji's decision was assented to and accepted unanimously.

In the afternoon, the city witnessed the unique sight of two large motor lorries (usually used to carry goods) filled with representatives of the four great communities of Bombay — Parsi, Christian, Muslim and Hindu — going round and visiting every quarter of the city, and of their occupants proclaiming the glad tidings of peace and goodwill. The Parsis were thoroughly won over. Whatever traces there were of ill-will, or a desire for revenge in their breasts, were all wiped out when Mahatmaji gave them the supreme authority to determine the final terms of peace. Only the day before, members of hostile communities had been breaking each other's heads at sight; and now today, representatives of the very same communities joined in a common cause were unitedly touring the whole city holding aloft the banner of peace. Such a sight, unique of its kind, sent a thrill of joy and exultation through the hearts of the citizens of Bombay, and cries of *Jai Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai*. (— Victory to Mahatma Gandhi) rent the air. What other hands could have wrought such a miracle? Having taken upon himself the whole responsibility for the rioting and bloodshed, Mahatmaji had offered his body as a sacrifice in expiation thereof. Thus was it that as by a miracle he had succeeded in quenching the rising flames of accumulated passion and hatred that had well-nigh overspread the whole sky of Bombay.

The news of the restoration of peace was hailed with delight everywhere throughout the city, and the leaders were returning in the very same lorries to announce to

Mahatmaji the happy news. It was a little before sundown when they arrived near Mahatmaji's quarters. The deep, resounding noise of the lorries and the loud cheering sent up by the returning leaders combined to set up such a tumultuous roar that Mahatmaji mistook the same for the near approach of a band of Parsi youths out to wreak their vengeance on his devoted head. He was so glad at this that his body swayed to and fro in sheer joy, and with a divine smile lighting up his countenance he expressed his delight in the following words: "That's right. That's right, indeed! When the Parsi youths arrive and demand Gandhi's head, I will instantly come out and give myself up." A thrill of horror passed through our frames as we heard these words uttered with so much zest, and we could only then realize with what consuming ardour he was craving to meet death as a sacrifice. It had hardly been possible for us to conceive of the cruel pain that was tearing his heart to pieces. If all feelings of ill-will towards you should have to be stamped out of your enemy's breast; if, indeed, he should have to be completely won over and made your very own, you must willingly submit to be maltreated by him; and if need be, you must cheerfully submit to be done to death by him. Under the inspiration of this great truth has Mahatmaji guided his life, and this it is that has made him an irresistible, world-wide force. In South Africa he had given practical proofs of this faith in him to an extent hardly conceivable. The anger of the Parsi community would be quenched in his blood if the Parsi youths came and broke his head, and that also would expiate his guilt—such thoughts as these cheered his spirits and buoyed him up beyond measure. I hurried forward in dismay towards the verandah; but saw that Providence in His infinite mercy had sent out His blessings and not danger. It was the divine flag of peace which the leaders of all parties had been bearing in their hands with such demonstrations of tumultuous enthusiasm; and it was they who had now returned to present their message of peace to Mahatmaji.

Following on the communal leaders' tour round the city, all minor disturbances and stray incidents of shooting ceased automatically. Shri Chhotani, President of the Central Khilafat Committee, who was absent from Bombay for a time had now returned. He came to visit Mahatmaji, and learning that it was the fourth day of his fast, he said to Mahatmaji, "You rest assured that I shall be able to stop the rioting in no time. Do take some nourishment. If you don't do so by tomorrow morning, I shall come and force it down your throat." Mahatmaji merely smiled at this manifestation of affection on the part of Shri Chhotani, but said not a word in reply.

At nightfall rioting was about to break out at two places. At one place, the military with charged rifles stood at attention, awaiting the final order to fire on a body of Hindu and Mussalman rioters. At that critical moment, Shri Shankarlal and some others hurrying up to the spot successfully pleaded with the English officer in charge to give them five minutes' breathing time, within which, with the exercise of great tact, they were able to prevail with the mob and move them away. At the other place, the rioters surrendered their poles, clubs and other weapons of offence, as soon as the news of the restoration of peace was brought to them by Shri Shankarlal and his party. Shri Shankarlal like a conquering hero returned, with his car filled with those poles etc., and as an ocular demonstration of peace restored, made a heap of them in Mahatmaji's own room. At nine in the evening a Parsi gentleman came to report that a considerable body of mill-hands had invaded their quarter, and that lawlessness might begin any moment. As soon as the news was heard, Maulana Azad Sobhani, Shrimati Sarojini Naidu and Shri Umar Sobhani went off and came back after they had succeeded in pacifying the mob. Again, at eleven in the night, another Parsi gentleman came in and appealed for the services of some volunteers. Instantly, in two overcrowded cars some fifteen to twenty volunteers left for the scene of disturbance, from whence no further trouble was reported. At six next morning (21st November), one of

our volunteers came with the news that he had gone among the people and his information was that the night had passed off quite peacefully. There had been no disturbances anywhere and that everybody had accepted the terms of settlement. Only among the Marathas were there some lingering traces of resentment. If they could be pacified, there was no further fear of trouble anywhere today. The riots had begun as a most unwarranted attack upon the Parsis, and a thirst for vengeance had therefore been most deeply roused in their hearts. It was Mahatmaji's patience, kindness, sympathy and magnanimity alone that succeeded in allaying that bitterness of spirit which like poison had been creating havoc among the whole community. The number of casualties, according to the official report, was 58 killed (53 Hindus and Mussalmans), and 381 wounded (298 Hindus and Mussalmans). According to the same report there was rioting at 130 different places; four liquor shops were burnt down, while 137 of them were smashed. Besides many tram and motor cars etc. were either wholly destroyed or seriously damaged.

#### CHAPTER XXIV

#### FAST BROKEN

Sometimes one finds individuals laid up with high fever, who would in a state of delirium indulge in hallucinations and incoherent speech. Here at Bombay, this time I saw that as in the case of an individual, so also in the case of a whole body of people, is it possible to enact, under the stress of a collective mental obsession, all sorts of wild scenes of frenzied violence. This malady of the soul which had laid its mortal grip on whole classes of people was treated by Mahatmaji with such consummate skill that he began to elicit unceasing and universal praise. An old Parsi lady, who came to report that her son's shop had been pillaged and that he had lost his all, left Mahatmaji while in the act of offering her blessings with uplifted

hands for Mahatmaji's wonderful attitude towards her community. At this time also a Parsi young man, hardly in a normal frame of mind, came in, leaning upon the shoulders of two friends. Falling at Mahatmaji's feet, he touched them, and then rose and stood awhile with clasped hands, quivering with emotion. For two or three consecutive days did the same youth come to our place in that abstracted state of mind, desiring to pay his heart's homage to Mahatmaji. But Mahatmaji would not even lift up his eyes; he would have better appreciated the young man if he could have curbed the exuberance of his emotions.

According to previous arrangement, the Working Committee was to meet at Surat on the 23rd November. But these several days' fasting had so told upon Mahatmaji's strength that he could not possibly leave Bombay at this time. Besides, it was necessary for him to stay in Bombay for a few days longer in order to watch if there was going to be any further turn in the situation. So on the night of Sunday, the 20th, Mahatmaji sent a message through Shri Dayalji of Surat, requesting the members of the Working Committee to come to Bombay for the meeting. On Shri Shankarlal devolved the task of arranging for the proper accommodation of Lala Lajpatrai, Pandit Motilalji, Shri C. R. Das, and other members who were expected to attend the Working Committee. At 9 p.m. Mahatmaji summoned me to massage his legs. Then, he said, "Tomorrow is my day of silence, or else I would dictate something for *Young India* to you. I am so weak; it will be rather difficult to sit up and write. However, you get up early next morning and keep everything ready for writing." This said, he began his Monday's silence. Finding him so enfeebled I laid myself down near him for the night, and rising at 4-30 in the morning arranged his seat and the writing materials for him. It was past five when he woke from his sleep; and sitting up he went on writing his articles without intermission till 8 a.m.

Monday (21st November) saw peace completely restored throughout the city. The mill-hands went back to

their work in their respective factories ; while tramcars, motor cars and other conveyances began to ply as usual. Normal conditions having been restored on Monday, the leaders of all the different communities in the city now approached Mahatmaji with a most pressing request that he should break his fast. There was no end to Shri Chhotani's loving admonitions. He came and went a number of times, each time repeating his threat that he was not going to wait any further, but that he would take the law into his own hands and force nourishment down Mahatmaji's throat. In the evening came a number of Parsi gentlemen, and soon after, at nightfall, two Europeans. They repeatedly requested him to break his fast. They were profuse in their praises of Mahatmaji, which one could easily see came from the bottom of their hearts, for the way in which by sheer weight of his transparent honesty, sincerity and broadminded sympathy he had succeeded so readily in quenching the rising flames of anarchy. After they had left, it was finally resolved that the next morning (22nd November), i.e. on the sixth day following the outbreak, the leading representatives of the different religious communities and political parties — Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians — co-operators and non-co-operators — all should meet Mahatmaji at a friendly gathering and join in a Peace Breakfast, when Mahatmaji was to break his fast, the restoration of peace having become now an accomplished fact. Mahatmaji, however, on his part, laid down one condition. He would agree to break his fast only on the collective assurance of the leaders assembled that they would hold themselves responsible for the preservation of peace in the city.

On the 22nd November, which was the fifth day of Mahatmaji's fast, I had thought that he would be too weak to take up any important work. Nevertheless, he rose punctually at half-past four in the morning and took to writing as usual. Remembering that he was to break his fast in the early part of that day, he just made a passing remark to himself, " I am quite at ease now ; I am enjoying peace within. But the moment I break my fast I shall be

plunging into a stormy ocean of pain and misery at the sight of surrounding woe."

At 8-30 in the morning, at a house at the Chaupatty crossing, close to Mahatmaji's residence, was held the Peace Breakfast meeting. Co-operators and non-co-operators, Hindus, Mussalmans, Christians and Parsis—all attended. The representatives of the different communities stood up, one after another, to express their joy and gratification at the end of their anxieties and fears, now that peace had been actually restored. At the conclusion, Mahatmaji read out his address written in Gujarati; after which at the earnest solicitation of the whole party, he broke his fast by partaking of a few grapes and only one orange. The Gujarati address was Mahatmaji's own translation from one in English which had been composed by him for publication. This famous address of his is best understood and appreciated in the light of the events and circumstances inspiring its production. It is given below in full :

"Friends,

"It delights my heart to see Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsis and Christians met together in this little assembly. I hope that our frugal fruit-repast of this morning will be a sign of our permanent friendship. Though a born optimist, I am not in the habit of building castles in the air. This meeting, therefore, cannot deceive me. We shall be able to realize the hope of permanent friendship between all communities, only if we who have assembled together incessantly strive to build it up. I am breaking my fast upon the strength of your assurance. I have not been unmindful of the affection with which innumerable friends have surrounded me during these four days. I shall ever remain grateful to them. Being drawn by them I am plunging into this stormy ocean out of the heaven of peace in which I have been during these few days. I assure you that, in spite of the tales of misery that have been poured into my ears, I have enjoyed peace because of a hungry stomach. I know that I cannot enjoy it after breaking the fast. I am too human not to be touched by the sorrows of others, and when I find no remedy for alleviating them, my human nature so agitates me that I pine to embrace death like a long-lost, dear friend. Therefore, I warn all the friends here that, if real peace is not established in Bombay and if disturbances break out again, and if as a result they find me driven to a still severer ordeal, they

must not be surprised or troubled. If they have any doubt about peace having been established, if each community has still bitterness of feeling and suspicion, and if we are all not prepared to forget and forgive past wrongs, I would much rather that they did not press me to break the fast. Such a restraint I would regard as a test of true friendship.

"I venture to saddle special responsibility upon the Hindus and the Mussalmans. The majority of them are non-co-operators. Non-violence is the creed they have accepted for the time being. They have the strength of numbers. They can stand, in spite of the opposition of smaller communities, without Government aid. If, therefore, they will remain friendly and charitable towards the smaller communities, all will be well. I will beseech the Parsis, the Christians, and the Jews to bear in mind the new awakening in India. They will see many coloured waters in the ocean of Hindu or Mussalman humanity. They will see dirty waters on the shore. I would ask them to bear with their Hindu or Mussalman neighbours who may misbehave with them, and immediately report to the Hindu and Mussalman leaders through their own leaders, with a view to getting justice. Indeed, I am hoping that as a result of the unfortunate discord, a *mahajan* \* will come into being for the disposal of all inter-racial disputes.

"The value of this assembly, in my opinion, consists in the fact that, worshippers of the same one God, we are enabled to partake of this harmless repast together, in spite of our differences of opinion. We have not assembled with the object today of reducing such differences—certainly, not of surrendering a single principle we may hold dear—but we have met in order to demonstrate that we can remain true to our principles, and yet also remain free from ill-will towards one another.

"May God bless our effort."

There is one feature of this restoration of peace that requires to be specially brought out. The fact has been already adverted to that the Peace Breakfast meeting was graced by the presence of leaders without distinction of religious or party labels, which undoubtedly added to the greatness and significance of the occasion. There were co-operators as well as non-co-operators present; there were Hindus and Mussalmans as well as Parsis and Christians. The truth is that the leaders of all the different communities had thrown themselves heart and soul into this work of peace-making; and it was only through their

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\* An arbitration board composed of elders.



mutual goodwill and co-operation that it became possible to bring back peace so quickly and by non-violent methods alone. It would be hardly fair to say that the whole credit belonged to the non-co-operators. On this point the evidence of Mahatmaji is clear and unequivocal :

"The credit for restoration of peace is not claimed for non-co-operators alone. I claim it for both co-operators and non-co-operators; for Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsis and Christians, including Englishmen. If all the peace-loving citizens had not joined, order could not have been restored. I claim the credit for Mian Chhotani. On, the 20th instant, but for Sir Pheroze Sethna who succeeded in inducing the military to stay their hand, a crowd would have been fired upon, whereas it was dispersed within five minutes by the efforts of Dr Pavri and Shri Shankarlal Banker. I can multiply instances of such dispersal on behalf of the citizens, irrespective of creed or party. Shrimati Sarojini Naidu was often asked by the military to help disperse crowds. Indeed if co-operating and non-co-operating Parsis had not helped, it would have been impossible to restore peace. At the Peace Breakfast it was Shri H. P. Modi who claimed the credit for the citizens. Shri Natarajan too gave unstinted praise to those who had brought about the much-desired peace. Shri K. T. Paul and Shri Douglas did no less."\*

## CHAPTER XXV

### SWARAJ ACCORDING TO MAHATMA GANDHI

The Bombay riots had no doubt come to an end ; but they brought home to Mahatmaji, as nothing else could have done, the fact that the first and foremost need for India was the spread and propaganda of non-violence as a dynamic factor of her political life. The efforts of the workers, so far as the preaching of non-violence among the masses was concerned, had fallen far short of what was required, and of what he had been led to expect. Nor had the workers themselves sufficiently imbibed the spirit of non-violence. He had set before himself the objective of an India-wide appeal of non-violence, and his belief was that if such an appeal could be broadcast among the

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\* *Young India*, December 1, 1921.

workers throughout the country, it was bound to meet with an irresistible response. For there was no gainsaying that in such measure as the workers had assimilated the spirit of non-violence in their personal lives, in that measure could they succeed in awakening that spirit in the lives of those that were violent or disposed towards violence. Therefore, and secondly, he saw that the preaching must not be by mere word of mouth. A mere lip-profession of non-violence could not lead to the maintenance of an atmosphere of peace. If by their daily conduct the workers could preach the true spirit of non-violence, and so demonstrate in their lives a spirit of goodwill for all, then alone would it be possible to establish in the country harmony in the place of discord, unity in the place of disunion.

Then, coming to the question of Hindu-Muslim unity, he felt that the principle of *ahimsa* (non-violence) must be applied to solve it. The spirit of mutual hatred and ill-will that lay at the very root of the quarrel, and which occasionally had assumed such hideous and overwhelming dimensions, had to be curbed and controlled by self-restraint, and non-violent conduct. For to him it was a truism that as long as the Hindus and the Mussalmans looked at each other in the light of enemies, so long in their weakness and impotence they would naturally be induced to seek the intervention of the ruling authorities and place themselves under their protective wings, in which case the authorities would take advantage of the opportunity and seek to aggrandize themselves at the expense of both, by weakening each in turn.

Then, leaving aside for the moment the question of the intervention of the present foreign bureaucracy in the settlement of our communal quarrels, Mahatmaji would go further. Assume, he would say, that there was no foreign Government over us exploiting our mutual quarrels and hatreds, and suppose, he would say, that these continued in full vigour, what would happen? His answer is that even then it would not be possible for us to continue for any length of time in a state of isolation from the

outside world, with our freedom intact. In other words, in our state of weakness caused by internecine quarrels, we should be liable to fall a prey to foreign aggression, even if we did not fall willing victims to it.

Mahatmaji would carry the argument still further. Assume, he would say, that we did not fall a prey to foreign aggression, even then, he would argue, there would be no Swaraj for the *masses*, unless of course our mutual hatreds had ceased, and we had become a united people under the all-compelling power of non-violence. For within the limits of India itself, there were plenty of domineering people who seek power and dominion, and taking advantage of our mutual hatreds and jealousies, would create further strife and discord, and play for their own hands. If these succeeded in establishing themselves in power, is it seriously to be argued, Mahatmaji would say, that they would turn over a new leaf and not tyrannize over the teeming millions and exploit them ?

Thus, it is clear that the question is not merely, How to be saved from the grip of the present foreign domination, or of possible future foreign invasion or aggression. The more pertinent question would be, How was it possible for the general body of people, the great masses of the land, to rescue themselves when the need arose, from domination and exploitation by the more powerful classes among their own countrymen ? On the one hand, it would be natural for these classes, once securely placed in power over the people, but owning no allegiance to non-violence, to utilize such power for purposes of self-aggrandizement and general exploitation. On the other, it would be equally natural for the oppressed masses to seek to shake off, if possible, the domination of their own countrymen by resort to brute force or violence.

But it is possible, says Mahatmaji, to spread a wave of non-violence throughout the country, if we can enlist in the service of non-violence a considerable and growing body of workers imbued with the spirit of non-violence. The primary need for the country, therefore, according to him, is to secure their services, or to raise a body of

non-violent workers devoted to the spread of non-violence. For Mahatmaji's proposition is that in proportion as *ahimsa* or non-violence should become the guiding principle of our lives, in that proportion a desire not to dominate but to serve the general body of the people (the masses) would permeate the country.

A whole-hearted acceptance of the teachings of *ahimsa* cuts at the root of the thirst for domination and self-aggrandizement, and gives rise instead to a longing for service, the service of the vast, multitudinous, poverty-stricken masses of the land. Those who intend to serve the general body of the people, and aspire to train and lead the General Will towards a new goal, must not, therefore, take to or think of the path of violence; but on the other hand, should shun it. The expression of this trained General Will is true public opinion, which must be clearly differentiated and distinguished from the will or opinion of the privileged domineering classes. It follows that those whose aim is not to serve this public opinion, i.e. the General Will, or the will of the people, but on the contrary, to force their own will upon the people, so as to make the General Will impotent and subservient to their own will, would have or naturally be induced to take not to the path of non-violence, but to that of violence. And when the General Will or public opinion in the true sense of the word, had been installed in the seat of authority then only would true Swaraj have been gained.

Summing up, according to Mahatmaji, Swaraj does not concern itself primarily with the destruction of foreign domination, seeing that such destruction may mean also the installation of an indigenous exploiting power; may mean, that is, the substitution of an indigenous domination for the foreign. Therefore, Mahatmaji's real object in inaugurating the scheme of non-violent non-co-operation was to install the General Will in the seat of authority as against the arbitrary will of a group or groups (whether foreign or indigenous); in other words, to make the latter subordinate and subservient to the former. To repeat, the ending of the foreign exploiting power, in the sense of

driving out the English from the land, is not the primary concern of Mahatmaji. The essential thing, in his view of the problem of Indian Swaraj, is that the present bureaucracy should be brought under the control of Indian public opinion, so as to make it subservient to it. In other words, directly the methods of political domination, and economic exploitation of the masses, which are being pursued at present, and the consequent flouting of, and trampling upon, Indian public opinion had been brought under real and effective control, or in the alternative, destroyed once for all, the substance of Swaraj would have been gained. In this sense, and this sense only, must be understood the famous, pithy declaration of Mahatmaji that the present system of Government must be ended if it could not be mended. There is no question of racial hatred here.

The question therefore is, How is it possible to achieve this substance of Swaraj through the power of non-violence? How is the enthronement of the General Will which is the substance of Swaraj, possible through the practice and preaching of non-violence? Mahatmaji's answer is short and unequivocal. He points out that the spirit of non-violence is the spirit of unity, and that without unity there could be no assertion of a true public opinion against a united bureaucracy. He amplifies his argument in the following manner. The greater the atmosphere of non-violence in the country, the more possible would it be to create and maintain an atmosphere of peace, harmony and union among the varied divisions and classes of the people. And the greater such general harmony and unity, the greater would be the power and prestige of a united Indian public opinion. In other words, under these circumstances the General Will would be able to make itself felt, and the Indian masses would know how to protect themselves against the tyrannical will of political power. And so gradually the atmosphere of violence which surrounds the present Government would automatically dissipate itself, and the latter would, in the altered situation, brought about by a united and dominating Indian

public opinion, have to descend from its high pedestal of arbitrary authority, and seek to ingratiate itself with such public opinion. In this way the inauguration and adoption of a national policy of non-violence would lead to the creation and enthronement of the General Will as against the arbitrary will of the foreign government, which has to be enforced and buttressed up by violence. In other words, a national policy of non-violence pursued with unerring aim would secure us the substance of Swaraj through the control of the bureaucracy by the General Will.

Now let us look at the other side of the picture. If the policy of non-violence be not accepted and adopted as India's national policy, it would only mean this, that a feeling of hostility and hatred against the foreign exploiting rulers would steadily grow and become rampant. Assume that the ultimate result of all this rise of temper against the foreign government ends in an organized revolt. Assume that the revolt is successful. What follows? The answer has already been adumbrated. We have seen that destruction of the present Government would not necessarily mean the installation of a true Swaraj, namely, a Swaraj in which the General Will, the voice of the people, i.e. the present exploited masses, would prevail, as against the will of the governing group or groups under the new indigenous regime. What do we find in other countries which are ruled by indigenous authorities, and not by foreigners? Do not the masses there have to wage an uphill fight against the governing classes? Everywhere in the so-called free countries we find the power of government resting securely in the grip of governing groups in close association and alliance with the capitalist classes. The evidence of past history and also of contemporary events go to establish the proposition that in so-called free countries, the indigenous ruling classes, although clothed in the forms of democracy, have kept down the working masses or labour in the interests of Imperialism and Capitalism. If such is the state of the general body of the people under indigenous government in free countries, there is need for great vigilance in the pursuit of a true

Indian Swaraj. For the ending of a foreign government may leave the general masses exactly where they have been, and may even mean a worse plight for them. Therefore, even if by resort to organized violence, the foreign political power were chased out of the land, there would be no guarantee that the general body of the Indian people would come into their own. And so Mahatmaji has pointed out that "our desire should be to establish Swaraj for the people, and not substitute one class rule for another, which may be even worse." \*

Hence the general conclusion at which Mahatmaji arrives is that in the type of Swaraj obtained by the violence of the military or other groups or classes, the General Will would not reign supreme and triumphant or even predominate. In other words, the adoption of a national policy of violence would not save the Indian masses from the grip of India's governing and exploiting classes. The net result of this discussion is that, according to Mahatma Gandhi, the enthronement of a true Indian public opinion, and through it of Swaraj for the masses, is only possible through the inauguration of a national policy of non-violence and the adoption of non-violent methods and activities, such as are embodied in the constructive side of non-violent non-co-operation.†

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\* *Vide Young India*, April 17, 1924.

† In the original there follows a description of a meeting of the Congress Working Committee to discuss the plan of future work, and then the story of a tour in the Bardoli taluka. — Ed.

## CHAPTER XXVI

## FORMATION OF AN ALL-INDIA VOLUNTEER CORPS

We have seen that the Bombay riots gave a new orientation to Mahatmaji's plans. Firstly, he came to the very definite conclusion that the power delegated by the All-India Congress Committee on 4th November (1921) to the Provincial Congress Committees to engage in civil disobedience on their own responsibility would have to be withdrawn or suspended. Secondly, he felt that it had become imperative to formulate new rules and regulations for better organization of the volunteer bodies then in existence throughout India. He was clear in his mind that these required to be thoroughly overhauled, and a more effective scheme of work would have to be evolved and substituted. Mahatmaji, in fact, had decided that no further advance in the direction of giving battle to the Government was possible or feasible until and unless the question of creating and maintaining an atmosphere of mass non-violence throughout the country was solved once and for ever. This meant that there should in future be no repetition of scenes such as had been enacted in Bombay on the fateful days of 17th, 18th and 19th November. Thus there was to be no launching of mass civil disobedience at Bardoli as had been arranged for November 23 (1921), and the primary work thenceforth was to be the work of maintaining peace and overhauling the whole constitution of volunteer organizations. The Working Committee at its sitting of November 23, gave sanction to Mahatmaji's proposals, although the crying a sudden halt while marching towards civil disobedience could be done not without a pang. The fact was that Mahatmaji having ruled mass civil disobedience wholly out of court under the then circumstances, some of our well-known leaders, who had thrown themselves heart and soul into the non-co-operation movement, but could not see eye to



eye with Mahatmaji on this particular matter, nevertheless felt constrained to submit to Mahatmaji's decision.

Thus, Mahatmaji's attempt to unfurl the banner of peaceful revolt at Bardoli had been frustrated by the Bombay riots, and after that how to maintain peace in every part of India so as to inaugurate a reign of mass non-violence became the primary object of his activities. He had set himself to the task of evolving a new scheme of organization and discipline of volunteers, disbanding those who had no faith in non-violence, and retaining those who had faith in non-violence and were prepared to submit to a course of discipline. To that end he placed before the Working Committee a series of draft resolutions, the most outstanding of which ran as follows :

"This (Working) Committee considers it of national importance that all Non-co-operation Volunteer Corps, Khilafat Volunteer Corps, and other non-official volunteer bodies, should be brought under control and named National Volunteer Corps."

As part of this Resolution, we further read :

"This Committee advises the Provincial Congress Committees to appoint Central Boards in their respective provinces for controlling and bringing under uniform discipline all the existing volunteer corps."

Then, Mahatmaji placed before the Working Committee a long list of rules according to which the volunteer organizations were to be formed. And he also advised that the Central Khilafat Committee, the Khalsa Committee, and other bodies, should all accept those general rules and work in harmony with the Congress resolution. Thus :

"This Committee commends to the attention of the Provincial Congress Committees the following draft general instructions and further requests the Central Khilafat Committee, the Khalsa Committee and other bodies, if they approve of the recommendations of this Committee, to pass the necessary resolutions to give effect to them."

The purport of those general rules may be given as follows :

Twenty volunteers would form a unit, and each unit would elect its own captain, to be called 'leader'. Twenty such leaders would among themselves elect one as their head, called 'officer'. All other officers would be appointed by the Provincial Board. In every province five members would form a Board or Central Committee of control. The Board will elect its own Chairman. In this way, Mahatmaji conceived the plan of forming a vast well-knit, well-disciplined body of non-violent soldiers for preserving the peace of the country. To put away from the minds of these volunteers all thoughts of their having to engage in a bloody fight, Mahatmaji took precaution at the very outset and definitely laid down in his draft resolution that they should not adopt the uniform of soldiers, and they were positively forbidden to go about with swords. But if they so wished they might carry ordinary sticks four feet long.

About their duties Mahatmaji laid down that they would preserve peace and order, organize and regulate meetings, processions and *hartals*, and, in case of emergency, would render social service under the direction of their leaders. Every volunteer would have to sign a pledge in triplicate, one copy to be kept in the District Congress Office, one copy in the office of the Provincial Congress Committee, and the third to be given to the volunteer himself. The most important, and, indeed the first, clause of that pledge was that the volunteer was to render implicit obedience to the orders of his superior officers. The second condition was that he was to observe non-violence in word and in deed, and inculcate the spirit of non-violence amongst others. A third condition was that he must be prepared to run all risks attendant upon the performance of his duties. Needless to say that by making non-violence the central principle of this pledge, Mahatmaji made it emphatically clear that the main idea behind the formation of these volunteer organizations was nothing but the preservation of peace and the creation of an atmosphere of peace throughout the country. This pledge and all the other draft rules, drafted by Mahatmaji, were approved

and adopted by the Working Committee at its sitting of 23rd November.\*

The eight items formulated by the Ahmedabad Congress as constituting the pledge for a Satyagrahi are not all to be found in the previous pledge-form adopted by the Working Committee on 23rd November for volunteers under the revised scheme. In the last-mentioned volunteer's pledge there were, as we have already seen, only four clauses, the most important of which, as constituting so to say his article of faith, was that the volunteer "shall observe non-violence in word and in deed, and shall inculcate the spirit of non-violence amongst others." Besides, this, there was another clause which stipulated that the volunteer "shall regard the pledge as binding upon him so long as the policy of non-violence is continued by the nation." The last and the fourth clause was that "he shall run all risks attendant upon the performance of his duty," which consisted mainly in the preservation of order, regulating meetings, *hartals* and processions, and rendering social service in emergencies. The old volunteer having henceforth to do the duties of a civil resister the Ahmedabad Congress made all the foregoing pledges still more hard and introduced a few more items or conditions, some of which might well be regarded as the civil resister's article of faith. Thus, belief in the removal of untouchability, in the unity between Hindus, Muslims and other Indian communities, in the need for the adoption of Swadeshi, or *khaddar*; and (fourthly) the belief that under the present circumstances of India, the righting of the Punjab wrongs, the satisfaction of the Khilafat claims, and the attainment of Swaraj were possible only through the adoption of non-violent means, and not by any other,—all these items were specifically introduced in the new Congress pledge for acceptance by the volunteers, now turned into civil resisters. The eight clauses of the revised pledge are given below :

- (1) I wish to be a member of the National Volunteer Corps.

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\* One chapter is omitted here. — Ed.

(2) So long as I remain a member of the Corps, I shall remain non-violent in word and deed and shall earnestly endeavour to be non-violent in intent, since I believe that as India is circumstanced, non-violence alone can help the Khilafat and the Punjab and result in the attainment of Swaraj and consolidation of unity among all the races and communities of India, whether Hindu, Mussalman, Sikh, Parsi, Christian or Jew.

(3) I believe in and shall endeavour always to promote such unity.

(4) I believe in Swadeshi as essential for India's economic, political and moral salvation; and shall use handspun and handwoven *khaddar* to the exclusion of every other cloth.

(5) As a Hindu I believe in the justice and necessity of removing the evil of untouchability and shall on all possible occasions, seek personal contact with, and endeavour to render service to, the submerged classes.

(6) I shall carry out instructions of my superior officers, and all the regulations, not inconsistent with the spirit of this pledge, prescribed by the Volunteer Board or Working Committee, or any other agency established by the Congress.

(7) I am prepared to suffer imprisonment, assault, or even death for the sake of my religion and my country without resentment.

(8) In the event of my imprisonment I shall not claim from the Congress any support for my family or dependants.

How to account for this length and severity of conditions laid down in the Ahmedabad Congress pledge? The answer lies in the addition to the responsibilities of the volunteer. The old volunteer had nothing more to do than organize peaceful meetings, *hartals* and processions, preserving peace and order, and rendering social service on occasions. But now the volunteer was no longer a mere volunteer. The Government having chosen to enforce the Criminal Law Amendment Act and declared all volunteer organizations unlawful, every volunteer, who enlisted himself as such, became *ipso facto* guilty of disobedience of official orders promulgated in the name of law, and so liable to punishment. And so from a mere volunteer he became a Satyagrahi, a defensive civil resister, in order to assert every citizen's primary right to form peaceful associations. He was to engage himself in individual civil disobedience, and break the new law promulgated by the Government for the disbandment of the volunteers. But

if this was so, the rules applicable to civil resisters must also be inserted in the pledge that a civil resister was to sign. At the All-India Congress Committee's session held at Delhi on November 4 (1921), these rules had already been formulated in detail. Hence what the Ahmedabad Congress did was to insert these rules into the body of the pledge to be signed by every member of the National Volunteer Corps formed under the Working Committee's resolution of November 23 (1921).

Thus, owing to the aggressive policy of the Government, taking away from the people the elementary right to form peaceful associations, the national volunteers were compelled to give open battle to them in their twofold capacity of Satyagrahis and volunteers. The qualifications of an individual civil resister demanded by the All-India Congress Committee of 4th November were :

"In the event of individual civil disobedience, the individual must know hand-spinning, and must have completely fulfilled that part of the programme which is applicable to him or her, e.g.,

(1) he or she must have entirely discarded the use of foreign cloth and adopted only hand-spun and hand-woven garments ;

(2) must be a believer in Hindu-Muslim unity and in unity amongst all the communities professing different religions in India as an article of faith ;

(3) must believe in non-violence as absolutely essential for the redress of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs, and the attainment of Swaraj ;

(4) and, if a Hindu, must by his personal conduct show that he regards untouchability as a blot upon nationalism."

These clauses being now applicable to volunteers in their capacity of Satyagrahis or individual civil resisters, were incorporated as so many additional clauses in the new pledge of national volunteers adopted by the Ahmedabad Congress.\*

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\* The steps taken by the Government are set forth in the omitted chapters. — Ed.

## CHAPTER XXVII

## MAHATMAJI'S JOY

When he read the telegram about the arrest of Basantidevi, wife of Deshabandhu C. R. Das, Mahatmaji felt like a child brimming over with sheer joy. It appeared to me that no other news of arrest had given him so much unalloyed satisfaction and joy as this. He told us that the defeat and set-back which the movement had sustained on account of the Bombay riots had been by the grace of God more than compensated under present circumstances. After the evening prayer, he broke the happy news to assembled Ashram members. His joy was so great that he could not check himself while speaking about this arrest. He indulged in jokes, laughing and making the whole body of Ashramites shout with laughter. In fact, I had never found him before in such a hilarious mood. Who among the ladies of the Ashram were ready and willing to seek the hospitality of the Government gaols? — inquired Mahatmaji. The response was instantaneous. Almost all of them were ready and would cheerfully go to prison to serve the cause. But some among the ladies had had their baptism in the gaols of South Africa, and these were most eager to undergo a further test and prove their unabated strength and courage. But said Mahatmaji, “The women of Bengal have this time beaten you hollow.”

After the evening prayer meeting, he passed some time in his own room, and then went out for a stroll. His whole frame seemed to be tingling with joy. In sheer delight his body was swinging now on one side, now on the other, as he was advancing. Mahatmaji at this moment reminded me of the school or college student, who when his examination was over was feeling the delight of new-found freedom. For three or four months prior to his examination, the student had worn out his body and mind

by incessant toil and worry, and now after his examination felt relieved of a heavy strain, and free and happy as a bird. The fact of the matter was that Mahatmaji had begun to feel that the purpose of his movement had been attained. When he left his room for the stroll it was about 8 p.m. Finding him going out alone in the dark, Ba enquired of him where he was going. He did not make any reply. I followed him with a lamp for some short distance, but uncertain as to whether he would like it, I retraced my steps. Mahatmaji was in high spirits when he came back in the company of Pyarelalji, both of them talking and laughing in a loud tone.

At the time of his arrest Motilalji had laid upon Mahadev a particular obligation that the *Independent* Paper should have to be kept up under any circumstances. If Mahadev was arrested, Motilalji had expressed the wish that Mahatmaji was to find his successor to take charge of the Paper. Mahatmaji informed Pyarelalji of Pandit Motilalji's wishes, and enquired whether Pyarelalji was ready for this work. Then, it was decided that Pyarelalji should proceed to Allahabad the very next day to take up the work; and he was told that, if necessary, a series of workers might have to be sent to gaol and take up the place of the arrested editor, and so keep the flag of the *Independent* flying. After this Mahatmaji gave me some instructions in connection with his correspondence, etc.\*

On the arrest of Deshabandhu Das on 10th December (1921), Shri Shyamasundar Chakravarty was elected to take his place as President of the Congress and Khilafat Committees of Bengal. In a letter to Shyamasundar Babu about this time, Mahatmaji thus expressed his view of the political situation of Bengal :

"It is a delightful thing to hear of these arrests; two things are needed to ensure early establishment of Swaraj—a ceaseless stream of civil resisters, and a non-violent atmosphere. I hope that Bengal will lead in both these matters."

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\* Further arrests are described in an omitted chapter.—Ed.

On 11th December, news was received at the Ashram that Mahatmaji's eldest son Harilal had been arrested in Calcutta. Mahatmaji was very pleased to hear the news, and at once sent a wire to Harilal expressing his satisfaction. Simultaneously, he sent the following urgent message to Devadas, his youngest son, at Allahabad: "You may court arrest any time — Bapu." The news of Harilal's arrest threw the whole Ashram into a state of joyous excitement, and men and women without exception were longing for the opportunity to offer themselves for arrest. It was clear to me that Mahatmaji's precept and example had driven out of the minds of the Ashram people all fear of gaol-life. Ba's example was inspiring. With justifiable pride she said, "I also have done three months with hard labour in South Africa," and then she described the kind of work that she had to do in the gaol. In the course of my narrative, I have had occasion to mention the name of Professor Kripalani, the Director of the Gandhi Ashram, Banaras. With regard to him we received a Banaras telegram saying, "Professor Kripalani with fifteen *ashramites* arrested — all calm." Reading the wire, Mahatmaji exclaimed, "Good! just the thing expected." On the 14th morning, Dr Mahmud, Secretary to the Central Khilafat Committee, came from Bombay and described to Mahatmaji the enthusiasm and determination that had been in evidence on all sides, and with feelings of unbounded joy summed up the situation in the country by saying, "Our victory is certain, there is no more cause for fear. By God's providence the Government have set their foot in the trap, and they are bound either to bend or to break."

On the 15th, Mahatmaji was taken by surprise to learn from a wire from Banaras intimating the arrest of Shri Bhagavandas, a leading citizen and distinguished leader of the place. Mahatmaji, however, felt happy at the news. For, he sent immediately the following wire to Shri Shriprakash, Babu Bhagavandas's son, "Hearty congratulations. Was totally unprepared for such consummation — Gandhi." Commenting on this incident, he said, "If the Government continues in its mad career at this



rate who knows, just as the battle of Kurukshetra was over in eighteen days, that this righteous war might not be similarly finished in eighteen days."

A telegram from Shri Rajendraprasad, non-co-operating leader of Bihar, was received on the same date, 15th, in which he reported, "Government proclaimed volunteer corps unlawful. Shafi, Janakdhari, and fifty volunteers arrested for disregarding proclamation. We propose that Haque, Brijkishore, Deepnarayan, myself should enlist. Wire instructions Chapra — Rajendraprasad."

Mahatmaji's reply was as follows, "Do enlist leaving instructions (to) young, reliable men ensuring non-violence — Gandhi."

On the same date, 15th, Mahatmaji received a wire from Salem from the Congress President of the year (1921), Shri Vijayaraghavachari. He informed Mahatmaji of the great excitement among the people on account of the promulgation of the Criminal Law Amendment Act in Madras. Shri Rajagopalachari having informed Mahatmaji from Vellore that the case against him had been adjourned for a few days, Mahatmaji gave him the following reply by wire, "Good. Hope you will get maximum penalty — Gandhi." On the same date, Mahatmaji was engaged in drafting the main resolution that was placed before the Ahmedabad Congress. In this draft he recast and enlarged the old volunteer's pledge adopted by the Working Committee at their Bombay sitting (23rd November). Copies of the resolution were, according to his instruction, despatched by us to all the principal non-co-operation leaders of the country.

A very strong rumour had spread in Ahmedabad on the 16th that Mahatmaji had been arrested. So in the evening many anxious people visited the Ashram with a view to get first-hand information. We were also given to understand that the rumour of arrest had caused a sudden fall to the tune of ten rupees in the piece-goods market. The influence of the Congress at the time was so great that it swayed the money-market, which remained unsteady for some days. According to the brokers of

Bombay, so we were told, the public had been eagerly on the look out as to what decision might be taken by the ensuing session of the Congress at Ahmedabad.

Meanwhile the co-operating politicians of India, known as the Moderate Party of India, found themselves in a very difficult and delicate position. They saw that the Government had been pursuing a mad career of repression, and could hardly justify a policy of keeping quiet over the affair. They saw also the unbending attitude of the non-co-operators, who had shown themselves capable of a degree of self-suffering which the Moderate leaders had hardly anticipated. So alike, as they thought, in the interests of the Government as of the non-co-operators, they started negotiations on their own account to bring some sort of compromise or reconciliation between the two contending parties. A considerable portion of these Moderates had also got frightened at the unprecedented awakening among the masses, and the degree of excitement prevailing among them. A certain landowner from Jubbulpur (C. P.) wired to Mahatmaji, "Situation extremely grave. Both sides equally determined. Undesirable happenings not unlikely. Your responsibility serious. Round Table Conference advisable. Viceroy also requested to hear."

To this Mahatmaji replied as follows, "Non-co-operators purely on (the) defensive. No Conference can do good unless Government penitent and prepared (to) recognize supremacy (of) public opinion — Gandhi."

Another well-known gentleman wired to Mahatmaji from the Punjab, "Punjab situation extremely serious. Going immediately Calcutta."

The above gives but a faint picture of the panic and anxiety that had seized the Moderate politicians and their following. On the other hand, and in sharp contrast, we find the general body of the people intoxicated with the hope of winning Swaraj under Mahatmaji's leadership by means of uttermost sacrifice and suffering. It is beyond my power to give any adequate description of the wave of hope, enthusiasm and joy that had been sweeping over

the country. The fear of imprisonment had taken leave of the hearts of the people. Not only that, but gaol-life had become a mark of honour, and a coveted object to most. The late Maulana Abdul Bari, great Muslim divine of Lucknow, had sent from that town a long telegram to Mahatmaji on 15th December describing the political situation in that part of the country. The exuberance of hope and joy that flowed through the whole of that telegram showed the prevailing feeling at the time. The full text of the wire was as follows: "Have come back from Hyderabad today. I was very much pleased by the victorious spirit of Maulavi Salamatullah and my other dearest Hindu-Muslim friends. I congratulate you on their arrest. We are proud of the citizens of Lucknow and Allahabad for their patience, tolerance, orderly manner, unity of action, and obedience to Congress orders. The correct report about *hartal*, both in Lucknow and Allahabad, is that it was complete, and perfect non-violence prevailed. Have just seen Pandit Motilalji and Maulana Salamatullah with their comrades in jail. All are cheerful and happy. Have just heard about your son's arrest. Hearty congratulations. Hopeful sign."

Mahatmaji's reply was couched in a vein of thankfulness to God at the hopefulness of the situation. "We have every reason (to) praise God for His mercy. Hope you are well."

To propitiate the great gods, *yagnas* or ceremonies of sacrifices are to be performed — such is the teaching of Hinduism. The greater the innocence of the sacrifices offered, the greater and speedier the result. The way of winning over your adversary by means of sacrifice and suffering is the great teaching of the *yagnas*. Mahatmaji was beginning to feel that the end of the great ceremony of *yagna* or sacrifice he had inaugurated as high priest for the liberation of the Motherland was drawing near. To hasten the result, he had been thinking of offering to the wrath of the Government some spotless "sacrifices". In this connection he used to say every now and then, "Why is not Mahadev getting arrested? It will give me

the greatest pleasure to hear that he has been arrested, and he will have some rest." So also when news came that Shri Jairamdas of Sindh had been arrested on the 20th December, Mahatmaji felt exceedingly happy. On the same date, Mahadev wired to say that the security of the *Independent* had been forfeited, and so if Mahatmaji agreed he would bring out a daily hand-written *Independent*, although he was expecting his own arrest every moment. Overjoyed at the news, Mahatmaji sent the following immediate reply to Shri Desai: "Bravo, get as many volunteer copyists as possible. Multiply on Roneo. Give briefest news and informing article. Daily volunteers to sell paper — Bapu."

Mahatmaji's joy and exaltation of spirits following on the arrest and imprisonment of all the great leaders of the country revealed to us almost at a flash the working of his mind, and the greatness of his character. The willing sacrifice offered in their persons by the leaders was, in Mahatmaji's eyes, the most enduring contribution to the national cause. The example they set of the spirit of sacrifice, fearlessness, and courage was beginning to become contagious, and that spirit must become part of the national character, if the battle of Swaraj was to be won. Hitherto the terrors of gaol-life had cowed down the people. But the example of fearlessness set by the leaders drove away fear from the hearts of their followers. The people had hitherto borne with bowed heads tyranny, repression or insult heaped on them; but now the time had come for them to stand with their heads erect, and not take things lying down. The awakened consciousness of self-respect had become general and the humiliation of foreign domination had become so intolerable that even ladies came out of their seclusion to take part in the campaign of freedom led by Mahatmaji. Above all, the people had so far entered into the secret of the kind of fight for which Mahatmaji stood that they were able to stand their ground unperturbed, and were not thrown off their balance, keeping order and peace even when their honoured leaders, and what was more, well-known and honoured ladies were

being led to gaol. From Mahatmaji's point of view, this was a great advance on the country's position, such as he had found it during the Rowlatt agitation days, when the populace, unable to bear the spectacle of Mahatma Gandhi being arrested, had indulged in unrestrained excesses. But now when honoured leaders were being clapped in gaol, the example of self-restraint which the people set was to Mahatmaji an asset of incalculable value. For if the battle of Swaraj was to be won by Satyagraha or the power of non-violence, this discipline of self-restraint through which the people were being put under the political violence of Lord Reading's Government in the sacred name of Law and Order, was daily strengthening the power of the people to fight to the finish, and correspondingly weakening the bureaucracy. By declaring the volunteer organizations unlawful, and inaugurating a policy of wholesale and universal repression, the bureaucracy had forged new methods of laying violent hands on popular freedom; but the net result of it was an increase of the people's strength and their determination of will, and a gradual decline of the power of the bureaucracy. Mahatmaji was, therefore, feeling that if after this he should himself conduct his peaceful disobedience campaign in some circumscribed area, the people, who had gone through this sort of practical training in non-violence, would be able to give a good account of themselves, and make all violent efforts of the bureaucracy nugatory. The chains of Governmental law would be broken, and the chains of tyrannical violence would stand unmasked.

Thus, with the growth of organized lawlessness by the Government, and a corresponding growth in the disciplined power and determination of the people to offer a peaceful resistance to such lawlessness, the issues were being daily and hourly joined. And as the struggle went on intensifying, Mahatmaji's feeling was that success was drawing nearer and nearer. Was this the secret of Mahatmaji's joy? Was Mahatmaji estimating the nation's good and evil in terms of victory or defeat in this struggle? Ordinarily, wherever there is a conflict of interests

between two parties, victory means only gain achieved by one party, followed by, or resulting in, loss or destruction of the other side ; and vice versa. The ordinary man is anxious above all to add to his own happiness and prosperity, and, if necessary, at the expense of others ; to establish his views and opinions as against the views and opinions of his adversary ; and also generally not merely to rest content with mere self-preservation, i.e., the maintenance of mere self-interest, but in addition to attempt to aggrandize himself at the expense of others, that is, by means of exploitation of his weaker neighbours. The ordinary conflicts of the world, whether between man and man, or between nation and nation, generally take their rise from this desire for self-aggrandizement, this desire to exploit others, wherever possible. Not self-realization but self-aggrandizement, whether individual, racial, national, creedal or communal, is the real object of many a fight, although waged in the name of religion, truth, empire, nationalism, law, order, and so forth. And when the real object is self-aggrandizement, however camouflaged, the end is sought to be attained by whatever means possible, whether it be force or fraud, whether it be terrorism and open war, or diplomatic cunning, and 'setting class against class. The need for resorting to violence for purposes of self-aggrandizement is thus explained, and Mahatmaji's creed of *ahimsa* or non violence, which is synonymous with self-suffering, is aimed at destroying the spirit of self-aggrandizement, which makes for all conflict.

The English having obtained victory in such a conflict have succeeded in establishing their supremacy in India, with the result that the interests of the children of the soil are necessarily subordinated and sacrificed to the interests of the ruling race. Here in the case of the English, the interests are those not of self-preservation, but of self-aggrandizement, which leads to exploitation. This exploitation by political masters naturally leads to the development of a sense of wrong in the victim when the latter begins to develop a sense of self-respect, whence

racial hatred and bitterness makes its appearance. The policy of British national self-aggrandizement at the expense of India has gradually roused in the Indian people a sense of collective consciousness, and a sense of collective wrong. This clash between the two mutually antagonistic national selves is gradually being developed into race-hatred.

The Indian people, although roused to a consciousness of being the victim of wrong, have not been able to vindicate their national self-interests in the usual violent way. But this resort to violent means even by way of self-preservation, although justified and justifiable, cannot be held as solving the whole problem. Judged by worldly standards, it is certainly not wrong to defend by force of arms one's individual or national interests as against the aggressor. Nevertheless, it is held that resort to force is to be avoided, if the dispute could be amicably settled, say, by means of a conference or by arbitration, or by reference to a law court. For the fundamental defect under which the settlement of conflicts by the arbitrament of the sword labours is that the conflict is not finally set at rest. Conflicts settled by a resort to arms know no ending, and cannot be ultimately kept within legitimate bounds. The adversary or enemy, even if he is in the wrong, may be kept down through coercion, but is not converted. The spirit of wrong-doing persists in him, and hence his submission to the logic of force implies and involves no "change of heart", no sort of "penitence" for the wrong inflicted by him on his victim. Therefore, from the point of view of theory as well as practice, it is clear that force is ultimately no remedy.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### SECRET OF MAHATMAJI'S JOY

But there may be another class of fight against the tyrant or exploiter which does not suffer from the limitations of a settlement effected through the arbitrament of the sword. This is the fight of Satyagraha, the fight *par excellence*, victory in which makes it possible for the down-trodden and the oppressed to rescue themselves from the clutches of the strong and the powerful, while at the same time turning away the power-intoxicated tyrant from his vicious ways—the way of self-aggrandizement and oppression. The fight is throughout peaceful on the part of the victim of tyranny, but equally determined, he being prepared to suffer the utmost at the hands of the violent adversary, but never to yield under his blows. This fight is brought to a finish when truth and justice are installed in their proper place, and at the conclusion the erstwhile enemy does no longer remain an enemy, but undergoes a change of heart and becomes a friend.

In Mahatmaji's opinion, a Satyagrahi will engage in a non-violent fight with an oppressor for the preservation of his manhood, for the triumph of truth and justice, for the maintenance or assertion of what he considers to be his legitimate rights and interests. It is the cause of truth and justice which he has undertaken, and which might not be allowed to suffer at his hands. And, therefore, if he is able to vindicate such a cause, he would also be able to turn the evil-doer away from the path of evil, and effect a change of heart in him. Therefore, while carrying on the fight in such a spirit of righteousness, the civil resister, without wavering or cowering before the evil-doer, would be able to stand all the blows that may be hurled at him, and would even be able to lay down his life for the cause. Such is the kind of fight waged by a Satyagrahi. As the



fight proceeds, the fury of the oppressor instead of abating would go on increasing ; and then would come the testing time for the Satyagrahi. If at this critical stage, the Satyagrahi without getting demoralized, or getting excited or provoked into retaliating measures, should make it his business to bear the full force of the onslaught, then the hour of his victory would be drawing nearer and nearer. And this victory would mean the final assertion of his manhood, the triumph of truth and justice, and the redemption of the oppressor. But unless the soldier in the cause of truth and justice is thoroughly trained and disciplined in the art and practice of a non-violent warfare, he is bound to go under. For it is to be remembered that if without cheerfully submitting to the oppression, the oppressed begins to bottle up his rage, and his spirit of violence within his heart, the oppressor would always remain afraid of a future retaliation, and there would be no reconciliation of hearts, such as would prevent a fresh outbreak of the struggle. Thus oppression and retaliation would go on in an unending vicious circle. On the other hand, if the fight is conducted in a non-violent spirit by the victim ; in other words, if without cowering or wavering the latter goes on putting up a valiant, determined fight, defying the worst excesses of the oppressor, the oppressor himself would begin to cower and waver, feeling himself helpless. He would begin to feel like Lord Reading "puzzled and perplexed" ; and when the critical stage is over, when the worst excesses of the tyrant have left the heart of the victim unsubdued, the time for reconciliation would arrive. Then it would become easy and possible for the evil-doer to desist from the path of evil and give his proper homage to truth and justice. The power of suffering by the Satyagrahi would then vindicate itself. It would then present before the evil-doer a new situation which would affect the psychology, the heart and the conscience of the evil-doer in almost a revolutionary manner.\*

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\* Read in this connection the following pronouncement by Mahatmaji :

"The Viceroy (Lord Reading) was confused when he said that

This kind of victory may fitly be styled "super-victory"; for while ordinarily a victory involves the defeat of one of contending parties, this kind of victory does not lead to the loss, humiliation, or defeat of either party.

To express more fully the implications of this type of victory, Mahatmaji generally made use of the words *penitence* and *change of heart* of the evil-doer. It is a matter for regret that Mahatmaji's use of these terms led not only the Government but also some of our leaders of the moderate school to charge him with a desire to "humiliate" the Government. But they ought to have understood that the Government could have no truer friends than those, who, by quietly submitting to all the punishments that were inflicted upon them, were trying for no other result than rousing and quickening the conscience of their rulers so that they might feel what course of grievous wrong they had been pursuing in regard to the Indian people.

Mahatmaji was, therefore, filled with joy at the news of the arrest of the leaders on all sides. Here for the first

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Swaraj would have come from the Parliament unless it came by the sword. But His Excellency is unused to any substitute for the sword. He will soon learn that there is a better and more effective substitute for the sword, and that is Civil Disobedience. It is daily becoming clear that Civil Disobedience will afford the course of suffering through which India must pass before she comes to her own." (*Young India*, 5th January, 1922). And again, "The late President Kruger when he with a handful of his undisciplined countrymen hurled his ultimatum against the British Empire, said he would stagger humanity. He meant that he would sacrifice every Boer, man, woman and child, and leave not a single Boer heart to subdue. And England yielded when she was tired of "concentration camps" in which Boer women and children died like flies. I know for certain that it is not legal subtleties, discussions on academic justice or resolutions of Councils and Assemblies that will give us what we want. We shall have to stagger humanity even as South Africa and Ireland have been obliged to. Only instead of repeating South African and Irish histories, non-co-operators are learning from the living examples of these two nations the art of spilling their own blood without spilling that of their opponents. Councils are no factories for stout hearts, and freedom is miasma without stout hearts to defend it." (*Young India*, 15th December, 1921).

time, without his having to work for it, appeared before him a situation so devoutly wished for by a Satyagrahi. The hour had struck, and the non-co-operators must not be found wanting at this critical juncture. Therefore, how to keep the movement in the straight but narrow path of non-violence, so that they might neither cower nor waver, nor get provoked into violence — such became the object of his effort and care. Therefore, at this time when the Government had been hurling their shafts at the non-co-operating resisters, Mahatmaji felt it necessary to reiterate and re-emphasize the full meaning of warfare by way of Satyagraha in words full of strength, and full of hope. Thus :

“ In the moment of our trial and our triumph let me declare my faith. I believe in loving my enemies ; I believe in non-violence as the only remedy open to the Hindus, Mussalmans, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians, and the Jews of India. I believe in the power of suffering to meet the stoniest heart. We must by our conduct demonstrate to every Englishman that he is as safe in the remotest corner of India as he professes to feel behind the machine gun.

“ By non-violent non-co-operation we seek to conquer the wrath of the English administrators and their supporters. We must love them, and pray to God that they might have wisdom to see what appears to be their error. It must be the prayer of the strong, and not of the weak. In our strength must we humble ourselves before our Maker.” \*

From what we have seen, the war of Satyagraha is won only by the pressure of innocent suffering and determined opposition on the part of the Satyagrahi soldiers. Victory attained by such means could alone lead to the redemption of the wrong-doer through a moral change of outlook, a change of heart, and a corresponding penitence. Therefore, in order to achieve a victory of this kind over

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\* *Young India*, December 8, 1921.

the rulers, it would not do to enter the lists with the fire of violence raging in one's breast against them. One might, indeed, for a time break out into violence ; but it is certain that that could not stand a prolonged onslaught of violence from the side of the Government. Either one would waver and cower under the repeated blows, or would be provoked to adopt retaliation. In either case, the battle of Satyagraha is lost. Mahatmaji, therefore, repeatedly said that those who were given to indulging and nursing in their hearts thoughts of violence, and feelings of racial hatred against the rulers, were unfit to be enlisted as Satyagrahis, and must retire from volunteer organizations. His invitation was only to those who were prepared to undertake a clean fight. Hence he wrote at the time (*Young India*, December 15, 1921) :

“Let the purest-minded become volunteers and be imprisoned. The instructions of the Working Committee in this matter must be strictly followed. The purest-minded alone are fit to go to gaol as civil resisters, and no other. If we have been lax hitherto, let us be religiously strict in our selection. I fervently hope that those who have not clean minds, or who do not believe in non-violence or Swadeshi or any vital part of non-co-operation, will refrain from applying. They will serve by their abstention.”

Thus, Mahatmaji was getting convinced that the example of sacrifice of the leaders was sowing the seeds of Satyagraha in the hearts of the people. He also felt that the march of repression was testing the fitness of the country for Swaraj. For, to the extent that the spirit of self-sacrifice and the power of innocent suffering and of determined resistance would dominate the hearts of the people, to that extent would the country be purified and advanced, and become capable of wielding the most powerful, as well as the cleanest, of political weapons. And so Mahatmaji's conviction was daily growing that the auspicious moment had been fast approaching when it would be possible to place before the sceptical world the example of political Swaraj won by the power of non-violence, and

of the moral conversion of the wrong-doer from the ways of violence to the ways of peace.\*

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE CONGRESS DECISION AND MAHATMAJI'S ACTION

*28th December :*

On the 28th the Congress commenced its proceedings at 2 p.m. After a few songs, several fresh telegrams of sympathy were read by Dr Ansari. Then, Hakim Saheb called upon Mahatmaji to move the main resolution. When he went to the rostrum an unprecedented enthusiasm was created among the delegates and visitors, and the gaze of the whole assembly was fixed upon him.

This excitement continued for a few minutes ; then suddenly there was a dead silence. At the outset Mahatmaji read the clauses of that long resolution one by one, and translated them into Hindi for the edification of those who could not understand English. Then, he delivered two speeches, one in Hindi and the other in English. The Hindi speech was devoted mainly to an exposition of the policy of non-violence. It was true, he said, that the ideal of non-violence was ordinarily pursued in the spiritual sphere, but under the circumstances in which India was placed, there must be an application of that principle in politics also, if there was to be any political advancement for the country. So long as Swaraj was not attained Congress workers should go on with their present activities, and preserve the peace of the country. They must be non-violent not merely in deed, but also in intent. It was not enough that they observed only physical non-violence ; they must also control their tongues ; in fact, they must purify their tongues. He said, " Let me declare

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\* At this point we omit a long narrative of negotiations between various Indian parties and the Viceroy, and of other events upto and including the first part of the meeting of the All-India Congress.—Ed.

to you my conviction that if you are sincere in your desire that India should attain Swaraj by your efforts, you cannot but bind yourselves by the several pledges that form part of this resolution."

Then, he explained why, according to him, it was impossible for India to attain Swaraj unless the policy of non-violence was adopted and followed. He said, by no other means would it be possible to establish unity among Hindus, Mussalmans, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and other communities that inhabit this vast country. 'Mad Hindus' would say, the Mussalmans could never be trusted, because they destroyed our Somnath temple; and 'mad Mussalmans' would similarly say that they must make common cause with their co-religionists in Afghanistan in order to maintain their separate identity and existence. He, therefore, pointed out that if the people renounced the path of non-violence, peace would never return to this country. He asked the delegates to deeply ponder over the present condition of Hindusthan, and never to imagine that they could do anything by the power of their sword. He warned them that in that case, the Parsis and Christians would think that they were happy and peaceful under British rule, and would go to make common cause with the British.

In conclusion, Mahatmaji addressed a few words specially to those who had enlisted themselves as national volunteers under the Congress pledge. He said, "You must not think that since you are prepared to suffer imprisonment, assault or even death in pursuit of your goal, you have taken the most extreme vow for the sake of your country. Because there is another, and a more difficult condition which you must observe in order to bring the struggle to a successful conclusion. It is that you must not nurse anger in your hearts when suffering imprisonment or assault at the hands of Government. You must know how to restrain your anger, if you desire to maintain non-violence in action for any length of time. Hazrat Ali, the hero of Islam, was once spat upon by an adversary; and it is my conviction that if he had not restrained his

anger at the time, Islam would not have maintained its unbroken career of progress up to the present time. This is our ancient and time-honoured method of dealing with an opponent. I assure you, it would not amount to suicide to embrace death for the sake of India, without attempting to kill your adversary. Suicide is a grievous sin, both according to Hinduism and Islam. But Hinduism sanctions suicide in particular cases; for instance, it would advise a person to drown himself rather than violate a woman. In a case like this even suicide becomes a commendable act. If Shaukat Ali had been here, he would have said, 'We must die for Swaraj; we must renounce our all, even wife and children, for Swaraj. And I sincerely believe that to be able to do all this for achieving Swaraj, was nothing strange or superhuman.'

In his English speech Mahatmaji said nothing about non-violence, but confined his remarks to an exposition of the inwardness of the main resolution about civil disobedience. His point was that till only a few days ago the people of India had been leading a life of helpless dependence upon the Government, unable to assert themselves for remedying the wrongs and oppression inflicted upon them by their rulers. And when they devised the moral weapon of non-violent non-co-operation for their protection and political growth, the Government began to repress them with an iron hand, and dubbed the policy with the dignified name of preservation of law and order. It behoved the Congress now to find out methods to meet the Government attack. Declared he —

"If you have at all followed the course, the downward course, that the repressive policy of the Government has been taking, you can only come to the conclusion that the Subjects Committee has rightly come to this resolution, and that the only answer that a self-respecting nation can return to the Viceregal pronouncements and to the repression that is overtaking the land, is the course mapped out in this resolution."

And, then, he said, "I want this assembly to understand the bearing of this resolution. This resolution means

that we have outgrown the stage of helplessness and dependence upon anybody. This resolution means that the nation through its representatives is determined to have its own way without the assistance of any single human being on earth, and with the help of only God above."

Thus explaining the civil disobedience aspect of the resolution, Mahatmaji proceeded to discuss the question of a Round Table Conference, and how it was affected by the adoption of the present resolution by the Congress. His first point was that it was derogatory to the Congress under the circumstances existing at that time to approach the Government with the proposal of a conference. He maintained that the proposal should proceed from the Government, in which case there was nothing in the resolution under consideration to prevent its consideration by the All-India Congress Committee. He, therefore, stated in his speech that "if Lord Reading means well," the adoption by the Congress of the civil disobedience resolution did not close the door for negotiations once for all, inasmuch as the Government could summon a conference whenever it desired to do so. "But if he means ill," however much he might repress the non-co-operators, they would never approach him for a conference with bended knees. Mahatmaji's actual words are given below :

"This resolution, if the Government sincerely wants an open door, leaves the door wide open for it. If this Government is sincerely anxious to do justice, if Lord Reading has really come to India to do justice and nothing less — and we want nothing more — I inform him from this platform with God as my witness, with all the earnestness I can command, that he has got an open door in this resolution *if he means well*. But the door is closed in his face *if he means ill*, no matter how many people go to their graves, no matter what wild career this repression is to go through."

"There is every chance," continued he, "for Lord Reading to hold a Round Table Conference; but it must be a real conference. If he wants a conference at a table where only equals are to sit, and where there is not to be



a single beggar, then there is an open door, and that door will always remain open."

Mahatmaji's contention was that so long as the Government depended upon its superior brute-force to impose its will upon the Indian people, it would not be able to view the triple demand of the Congress with the eyes of reason and justice, or grant an equality of status to the Indian representatives. A conference summoned under such circumstances might be well enough to register the decrees of the Government, but was bound to be ineffectual so far as the satisfaction of the claims and grievances of the people was concerned.

"God only knows if I could possibly advise you to go to the Round Table Conference, if I could possibly advise you not to undertake this resolution of civil disobedience, I would have done so." With these solemn words Mahatmaji concluded his observations on the proposed conference. He did not reject the proposal, in the shape in which it was intended to be placed before the Congress by Pandit Malaviyaji, out of sheer obstinacy, or without the consideration demanded by the gravity of the question. At that time Mahatmaji himself and the general body of non-co-operators were under the impression that the proposal was raised at the instigation of Government merely as a diplomatic move, and that Pandit Malaviya was an instrument in the hands of Lord Reading in playing upon the credulity of the politicians of the Moderate school. Mahatmaji's whole soul rose in protest against such dealing, and he broke out :

"No matter what you do, no matter how you repress us, we shall one day wring reluctant repentance from you."

And, then, in a loud voice, he continued,

"This resolution is a challenge to authority that is enthroned on arrogance. It is a challenge to the authority which disregards the considered opinion of millions of thinking human beings. It is an humble, an irrevocable challenge.....

"I am a man of peace. I believe in peace. But I do not want peace at any price. I do not want the peace that

you find in a stone. I do not want the peace that you find in the grave," etc.

The uncommon vehemence and force with which Mahatmaji uttered these words made it appear as if his whole bosom was being rent asunder. His appearance of wrathful indignation, and loud, thundering voice produced a sort of tremor among the audience ; it seemed as if the earth shook at the time ; and the whole assembly remained stunned and spell-bound for a few minutes after he had closed that unique and unforgettable oration.

The resolution was seconded by Shrimati Sarojini Naidu, Shri Viththalbhai Patel, and other well-known leaders, after which it was accepted by the Congress amidst a wild scene of joy and enthusiasm.\*

Pandit Malaviya's efforts to bring about a Round Table Conference having failed, it was decided, as previously arranged, to start the campaign of mass civil disobedience from Bardoli. From 18th to 28th January (1922), Mahatmaji stayed at the Ashram in expectation of a final message from Pandit Malaviyaji. At this time the non-co-operators were everywhere found to be in an exultant mood, because of the failure of the Government to stem the tide of their movement, which instead of abating under Government repression derived added strength and intensity from the same, and the enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds. But Mahatmaji appeared to be very thoughtful. No trace of justifiable pride was observable in his countenance, even though that moment appeared to be one of triumph for the non-co-operators. On the contrary, he seemed to have been meekly analysing the situation, and watching the development of events with humility and caution. Instead of being sorry for Pandit Malaviyaji's failure, he was gratified that the Round Table Conference had not been summoned by the Government. He had agreed, no doubt, under pressure and persuasion of friends like Malaviyaji and Shri Jinnah, to the proposal of the conference, but not without misgivings,

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\* Some fifteen chapters of political details are omitted here.—Ed.

for in his inmost heart he could not help regarding it with a good deal of fear and suspicion. He felt that the country had not gathered strength enough to enable the representatives of the people to assert an equality of status with the Government. And he held that so long as the present unnatural relation with the Government existed, and the people were looked down upon as objects of oppression and exploitation, there could not possibly be any conference with the Government worth the name. The prime necessity, therefore, according to him, was to purify this unnatural relation of superiority affected by the authorities resulting in race-domination and forcible suppression of the natural rights of the Indian people; and it was Mahatmaji's conviction that unless the people had given tangible proofs of their capacity to go through an ordeal of suffering, such as must necessarily follow upon the inauguration of a campaign of civil disobedience, and thereby shown themselves fit to carry on effectively the sternest fight for the removal of their just grievances, and also for the preservation of their manhood and their freedom, it was not possible to modify the present impure relation and establish in its stead a relation of equality and amity with the ruling authorities. He, therefore, believed that the attempt to bring about a Round Table Conference for the settlement of the questions at issue was premature, and bound to be abortive.

Apart from the question of establishing a proper relation with the ruling power, there was the question whether the country had developed sufficient character-power to overcome the national weaknesses, the absence of a genuine solidarity and want of working experience, in order to be able to carry on the administration. The comparative indifference of the educated classes towards the programme of the *charkha* and *khaddar* was a clear indication to Mahatmaji that he had failed to remove their partiality for merely an external and intellectual type of agitation, as distinguished from solid work for the regeneration of the country. Then, there was the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity, which though temporarily seeming to

have solved itself, might after all prove to be a delusion. He found that the majority of his followers had till then subscribed to the policy of non-violence merely as a weapon of the weak, and had not therefore realized the true meaning and significance of Satyagraha. About untouchability, the response given by the majority of the orthodox classes of Hindus was far from satisfactory. How long could Swaraj last in India till these weaknesses of national character had been removed—was the problem that began to agitate him. He knew that by means of mass civil disobedience in Bardoli, he had the power to shake even to its foundation the entire system of British administration in India, but unless the country was ready to shoulder the responsibility of ordered and peaceful Government, would it be of any avail, so far as the true interests of the country were concerned, to start such a campaign? He, therefore, came to the conclusion that the best course under the circumstance would be to engage the country in constructive work for a further period of time, so that the people might be more disciplined and organized, and the strength of the country thereby increased. All these thoughts of Mahatmaji found expression in an article from his pen in his Gujarati weekly the *Navajivan*, an English translation of which appeared in the *Independent* of Allahabad about this time. A portion of that translation is given below :

“I am positively shaking with fear. If a settlement were to be made, then where are we to go? Although I will miss no opportunity of settlement, still after having come to know the strength of India I am afraid of the settlement. What will be our condition if settlement is made before we have been thoroughly tested? It would be like that of a child prematurely born which will perish in a short time. In Portugal, the Government was changed in a moment as the result of a revolution, and in that country, new revolutions are constantly occurring, and no one constitution endures. In Turkey when all of a sudden the Government was changed in the year 1909, congratulations came from all sides, but this was only a nine days’

wonder. The change was like a dream. After that Turkey had to suffer much, and who knows how much more suffering is still in store for that brave people. On account of this experience, I am often plunged in anxiety."

But how could Mahatmaji sit still without finding some remedy for the lawless campaign of repression started by the Government on all sides of the country, or without releasing the workers and popular leaders who had been clapped into prison without any reason or justification? Could he tolerate the forcible suppression of freedom of speech and freedom of association wantonly and deliberately indulged in by the Government? Mahatmaji felt that it was not possible for him to do so. He, therefore, made up his mind to start mass civil disobedience at Bardoli, with these as points at issue, and thereby draw the whole wrath and fury of the Government upon his own devoted head.

Mahatmaji started from the Ashram for Bardoli on 27th January, and at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee held at Surat on 31st January, he obtained the permission of the committee to start mass civil disobedience from Bardoli. On the 1st of February, he sent his ultimatum to the Viceroy in which His Excellency was asked to make the final decision on behalf of the Government by the 11th of February (1922). The Government reply to this ultimatum was given in a communique issued on 6th February (1922), refusing all the demands made by Mahatmaji. It was therefore finally decided on the 7th, that the campaign of civil disobedience would be started from the 12th. On the 7th February, Mahatmaji sent to the Press a long rejoinder to the Government communique, refuting the charges made by Lord Reading throwing the blame of the struggle upon the shoulders of the non-cooperators, and declared that the Government had left no other way for the people to maintain their self-respect but to engage in the battle of civil disobedience.

In the meantime, Shri Jinnah and his coadjutors of the Bombay Conference had failed to elicit any reply from the Viceroy to their repeated representations. Although

they had been sending regular wires to His Excellency from the 16th of January, the only reply they received was a letter by post on 30th January from the Private Secretary to Lord Reading intimating that the Government was not prepared to summon the Round Table Conference proposed by the All-Parties Conference at Bombay. Then, the secretaries of the conference asked for an interview with the Viceroy to which no reply was given. They even went to the extent of asking His Excellency to lay down his own terms, but without any response. The two weeks' time given by Mahatmaji to the conference authorities for negotiation with the Government having come to a close on 31st January, the secretaries of the conference approached Mahatmaji for an extension of the time-limit for four days more. Mahatmaji's ultimatum to the Viceroy was posted on 1st February, and was not sent to the Press before the 4th, the date on which it was expected to reach His Excellency's hands. Therefore, the four days' extension asked for by Shri Jinnah and Shri Jayakar was obtained by them. And yet they publicly blamed Mahatmaji for not waiting for a further period, while the scant courtesy shown to them by the Viceroy who had not replied to their representations till the 30th January, or had refused to grant them an interview when they sought it, did not appear to have wounded their sense of self-respect at all.

## CHAPTER XXX

### A STUDY IN CONTRAST.

Mahatmaji's ultimatum to the Viceroy, then the Government communiqué, followed as it was by a rejoinder from Mahatmaji, constitute three of the most important documents of the non-co-operation movement, which should find a lasting place in the political history of India. The origin of the non-co-operation movement and the differences between the standpoints and arguments of the Indian people and those of the British Government in India on the points at issue, would be found recorded in them. We expect the reader to carefully read these documents printed in full below. These documents are sufficient to bring out the difference in character between the two main actors of the drama, namely, Mahatma Gandhi on the side of the people, and Lord Reading as representative of an Imperialist Government; the truthfulness and transparent honesty of the one standing in striking contrast against the artfulness and diplomacy of the other. The refreshing candour of the confessions made by Mahatmaji in his ultimatum or in the rejoinder to the Government communiqué about the sins of commission by the non-co-operators, or their weaknesses on account of the forces of violence not being properly brought under control should be compared with Lord Reading's emphatic denial that the Government had started any campaign of repression against the non-co-operators. Said His Excellency in the communiqué referred to above: "In the first place they (the Government) emphatically repudiate the statement that they have embarked on a policy of lawless repression," etc. And, again, "There is no shadow of justification for the charge that their policy has been one of indiscriminate and lawless repression." \*

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\* For a detailed refutation of this palpable mis-statement, see appendix A.

The reader of this book must be aware how upon the failure of the welcome-demonstrations organized by the Government in connection with the visit of the Prince of Wales to India, the Government of Lord Reading had started a campaign of wholesale arrests of leaders and workers throughout India, and about twenty-five thousand Indians were sent to prison. Besides, murderous assaults upon harmless volunteers or other Indian citizens under the direction of responsible officers of the Government, looting of Congress offices in broad daylight became almost of daily occurrence in North India, and there were cases of cold-blooded murder by civil guards organized by the Government. In his rejoinder to the Government communique Mahatmaji mentioned nine such cases out of an immense list, and challenged the Government to disprove the allegations. M. Paul Richard, a well-known French writer, who was in India at the time, in the course of an interview stated that the graphic description of the atrocities committed by the authorities upon the non-co-operators in the Naini Jail of U. P. made him almost hopeless about the future of the human race. His exact words were as follows: "When I read Shri Desai's letter in *Young India*, I became discouraged with our human race—especially that part of it which styles itself as civilized." And yet the reader will find the Viceroy emphasizing in his communique that he had not started any campaign of repression to suppress the movement of non-co-operation. His Excellency Lord Reading had come to India with the reputation of a great Judge, and had raised hopes in certain minds that he would deal impartially with the grievances of the people, and make an honest attempt to allay the discontent that had been swaying the country from one end to another. But Mahatmaji had his doubts. In an article in *Young India*, dated January 19, 1921, immediately after His Excellency's appointment as Viceroy of India, he wrote as follows: "Lord Reading has declared his intention to do the right. But the system which he is coming to administer will not permit him to do what is right. That is India's experience. If he succeeds in doing



the right, I promise that he will also succeed in destroying the system or radically reforming it. Either he will swallow the system or the system will swallow him." The communique issued by His Excellency in reply to Mahatmaji's ultimatum showed that the system had not merely swallowed him, but had assimilated him as thoroughly as to have changed him beyond recognition.

### THE "ULTIMATUM"

To

His Excellency,

The Viceroy, Delhi.

Sir,

Bardoli is a small *tahsil* in the Surat District in the Bombay Presidency, having a population of about 87,000 all told.

On the 29th ultimo, it decided under the presidency of Shri Vitthalbhai Patel to embark on mass civil disobedience, having proved its fitness for it in terms of the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee which met at Delhi during the first week of November last. But as I am perhaps chiefly responsible for Bardoli's decision, I owe it to Your Excellency and the public to explain the situation under which the decision has been taken.

It was intended under the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee, before referred to, to make Bardoli the first unit for mass civil disobedience in order to mark the national revolt against the Government for its consistently criminal refusal to appreciate India's resolve regarding the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj.

Then followed the unfortunate and regrettable rioting on the 17th November last in Bombay, resulting in the postponement of the step contemplated by Bardoli.

Meanwhile, repression of a virulent type has taken place, with the concurrence of the Government of India, in Bengal, Assam, the United Provinces, the Punjab, the Province of Delhi, and in a way in Bihar and Orissa and elsewhere. I know that you have objected to the use of the word *repression* for describing the action of the authorities in these provinces. In my opinion, when action is taken which is in excess of the requirements of a situation, it is undoubtedly repression. The looting of property, assaults on innocent people, the brutal treatment of prisoners in the jails including flogging, can in no sense be described as legal, civilized, or in any way necessary. This official lawlessness cannot be described by any other term but lawless repression. Intimidation by non-co-operators or their sympathizers to a certain extent in connection with *hartals* and picketing may be admitted, but in no case can it be held to justify the wholesale suppression of peaceful volunteering or equally peaceful public

meetings under a distorted use of an extraordinary law which was passed in order to deal with activities which were manifestly violent both in intention and action, nor is it possible to designate as otherwise than repression, action taken against innocent people under what has appeared to many of us an illegal use of the ordinary law, nor again can the administrative interference with the liberty of the Press under a law that is under promise of repeal be regarded as anything but repression.

The immediate task before the country, therefore, is to rescue from paralysis freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of the Press. In the present mood of the Government of India and in the present unprepared state of the country in respect of complete control of the forces of violence, non-co-operators were unwilling to have anything to do with the Malaviya Conference whose object was to induce Your Excellency to convene a Round Table Conference. But as I was anxious to avoid all avoidable suffering I had no hesitation in advising the Working Committee of the Congress to accept the recommendations of that conference. Although in my opinion the terms were quite in keeping with your own requirements as I understood them through your Calcutta speech and otherwise, you have summarily rejected the proposal.

In the circumstances, there is nothing before the country but to adopt some non-violent method for the enforcement of its demands including the elementary rights of free speech, free association and free Press. In my humble opinion, the recent events are a clear departure from the civilized policy laid down by Your Excellency at the time of the generous, manly and unconditional apology of the Ali Brothers, viz., that the Government of India should not interfere with the activities of non-co-operators so long as they remained non-violent in word and deed. Had the Government's policy remained neutral and allowed public opinion to ripen and have its full effect, it would have been possible to advise postponement of the adoption of civil disobedience of an aggressive type till the Congress had acquired fuller control over the forces of violence in the country and enforced greater discipline among the millions of its adherents. But this lawless repression (in a way unparalleled in the history of this unfortunate country) has made the immediate adoption of mass civil disobedience an imperative duty. The Working Committee of the Congress has restricted it to only certain areas to be selected by me from time to time, and at present it is confined only to Bardoli. I may, under the said authority, give my consent at once in respect of a group of 100 villages in Guntur in the Madras Presidency, provided they can strictly conform to the conditions of non-violence, unity among different classes, the adoption and manufacture of hand-spun *khadi* and untouchability.

But before the people of Bardoli actually commence mass civil disobedience, I would respectfully urge you as the head of the Gov-

ernment of India finally to revise your policy and set free all the non-co-operating prisoners who are convicted or under trial for non-violent activities, and to declare in clear terms a policy of absolute non-interference with all non-violent activities in the country, whether they be regarding the redress of the Khilafat or the Punjab wrongs, or Swaraj, or any other purpose, and even though they fall under the repressive sections of the Penal Code or the Criminal Procedure Code or other repressive laws, subject always to the condition of non-violence. I would further urge you to free all the fines and forfeitures recently imposed. In thus urging, I am asking Your Excellency to do what is being done today in every country which is deemed to be under civilized Government. If you can see your way to make the necessary declaration within seven days of the date of publication of this manifesto, I shall be prepared to advise postponement of civil disobedience, of an aggressive character, till the imprisoned workers have, after their discharge, reviewed the whole situation and considered the position *de novo*. If the Government make the requested declaration, I shall regard it as an honest desire on its part to give effect to public opinion, and shall therefore have no hesitation in advising the country to be engaged in further moulding public opinion without violent restraint from either side, and trust to its working to secure the fulfilment of its unalterable demands. Aggressive civil disobedience in that case will be taken up only when the Government departs from its policy of strictest neutrality, or refuses to yield to clearly expressed opinion of the vast majority of the people of India.

I remain,  
Your Excellency's  
faithful servant and friend,  
M. K. GANDHI

Bardoli,  
1st February, 1922.

#### GOVERNMENT OF INDIA'S REPLY

Delhi, February 6.

"The manifesto, issued by Mr Gandhi on the 4th of February, justifying his determination to resort to mass civil disobedience, contains a series of mis-statements. Some of these are so important that the Government of India cannot allow them to pass unchallenged.

In the first place, they emphatically repudiate the statement that they have embarked on a policy of lawless repression and also the suggestion that, the present campaign of civil disobedience has been forced on the non-co-operation party in order to secure the elementary rights of free association, free speech and of a free Press. In the meantime the Government of India desire to draw attention to the fact that the decision to adopt a programme of civil disobedience was finally accepted on the 4th of November before the recent

notifications relating either to the Seditious Meetings Act, or the Criminal Law Amendment Act to which Mr Gandhi unmistakably refers, were issued. It was in consequence of serious acts of lawlessness, committed by persons who professed to be followers of Mr Gandhi and the non-co-operation movement, that the Government were forced to take measures, which are in strict accordance with the law, for the protection of peaceful citizens in the pursuit of their lawful avocations.

2. Since the inauguration of the non-co-operation movement, the Government of India, actuated by a desire to avoid anything in the nature of repression of political activity, even though it was of an extreme character, have restricted their action in relation thereto to such measures as were necessary for the maintenance of law and order and the preservation of public tranquillity. Up to November no steps, save in Delhi last year, were taken against volunteer associations. In November, however, the Government were confronted with a new and dangerous situation. In the course of the past year there had been systematic attempts to tamper with the loyalty of the soldiers and the police, and there had occurred numerous outbreaks of serious disorder directly attributable to the propaganda of the non-co-operation party amongst the ignorant and excitable masses. These outbreaks had resulted in grave loss of life, the growth of a dangerous spirit of lawlessness and increasing disregard for lawful authority. In November, they culminated in grave riots in Bombay in which 53 persons lost their lives and approximately four hundred were wounded. On the same date dangerous manifestations of lawlessness occurred in many other places, and at this period it became clear that many of the volunteer associations had embarked on a systematic campaign of violence, intimidation and obstruction, to combat which proceedings under the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure had proved ineffective.

In these circumstances the Government were reluctantly compelled to resort to measures of a more comprehensive and drastic character. Nevertheless, the operation of the Seditious Meetings Act was strictly limited to a few districts in which the risk of grave disturbances of the peace was specially great, and the application of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908 was confined to associations the majority of the members of which had habitually indulged in violence and intimidation. It is impossible here to set out in detail the evidence which justified the adoption of these measures in the different provinces. Abundant proof is, however, to be found in the published proceedings of the various Legislative bodies, in the communiques of different Local Governments and in the pronouncements of heads of Provinces. While resolute in their determination to enforce respect for law and order, and to protect loyal and peaceful subjects of the Crown, the Government have at the same time taken every precaution possible to mitigate, where desirable, the conditions

of imprisonment, and to avoid any action which might have the appearance of vindictive severity. Ample proof of this will be found in the orders issued by Local Governments. Numerous offenders have been released, sentences have been reduced, and special consideration has been shown in the case of persons convicted of offences under the Seditious Meetings Act, or the Criminal Law Amendment Act. There is thus no shadow of a justification for the charge that this policy has been one of indiscriminate and lawless repression.

3. A further charge which has been brought by Mr Gandhi is that the recent measures of the Government have involved a departure from "the civilized policy laid down by His Excellency at the time of the apology of the Ali Brothers, namely, that the Government of India should not interfere with the activities of non-co-operators so long as they remained non-violent in word and deed." The following citation from the communique of the Government of India issued on the 30th May, conclusively disproves this statement. After explaining that in view of the solemn undertaking contained in the statement over their signature, it had been decided to refrain from instituting criminal proceedings against Messrs Mohammed Ali and Shaukat Ali, the Government of India observed: "It must not be inferred from the original determination of the Government to prosecute for speeches inciting to violence, that promoting disaffection of a less violent character is not an offence against the law. The Government of India desire to make it plain that they will enforce the law relating to offences against the State as and when they may think fit against any person who had committed breaches of it."

It remains for the Government of India to deal with the allegation that His Excellency summarily rejected the proposal for a conference, although the terms put forward by the conference at Bombay and accepted by the Working Committee of the Congress were quite in keeping with His Excellency's own requirements as indicated in his speech at Calcutta. How far this is from being the case will be manifest from a comparison of His Excellency's speech with the terms proposed by the conference. His Excellency in that speech insisted on the imperative necessity, as a fundamental condition precedent to the discussion of any question of a conference, of the discontinuance of the unlawful activities of the non-co-operation party. No assurance on this point was, however, contained in the proposals advanced by the conference.

On the contrary, whilst the Government were asked to make concessions which not only included the withdrawal of the notifications under the Criminal Law Amendment and Seditious Meetings Acts, and the release of persons convicted thereunder, but also the release of persons convicted of offences designed to affect the loyalty of the army, and the submission to an Arbitration Committee of the cases of other persons convicted under the ordinary law of the land, there was no suggestion that any of the illegal activities of the non-

co-operators other than *hartals*, picketing and civil disobedience, should cease. Moreover, it was evident from statements, made by Mr Gandhi at the conference, that he intended to continue the enrolment of volunteers in prohibited associations, and preparations for civil disobedience. Further, Mr Gandhi also made it apparent that the proposed Round Table Conference would be called merely to register his decrees. It is idle to suggest that terms of this character fulfilled in any way the essentials, laid down by His Excellency or can reasonably be described as having been made in response to the sentiments expressed by him.

4. Finally, the Government of India desire to draw attention to the demands put forward in the concluding paragraph of Mr Gandhi's present manifesto, which exceed even the demands made by the Working Committee of the Congress. Mr Gandhi's demands now include (1) the release of all prisoners convicted or under trial for non-violent activities; (2) a guarantee that Government will refrain absolutely from interference with all non-violent activities of the non-co-operation party, even though they fall within the purview of the Indian Penal Code, or in other words, an undertaking that Government will indefinitely hold in abeyance, in regard to the non-co-operators, the ordinary and long-established law of the land. In return for these concessions, he indicates that he intends to continue the illegal and seditious propaganda and operations of the non-co-operation party, and merely appears to postpone civil disobedience of an aggressive character until the offenders now in jail have had an opportunity of reviewing the whole situation. In the same paragraph, he re-affirms the unalterable character of the demands of his party. The Government of India are confident that all right-thinking citizens will recognize that this manifesto constitutes no response whatever to the speech of His Excellency at Calcutta and that the demands made are such as no Government could discuss, much less accept.

5. The alternatives that now confront the people of India are such as sophistry can no longer obscure or disguise. The issue is no longer between this or that programme of political advance, but between lawlessness with all its dangerous consequences on the one hand, and on the other, the maintenance of those principles which lie at the root of all civilized Governments. Mass civil disobedience is fraught with such danger to the State that it must be met with sternness and severity. The Government entertain no doubt that in any measures which they may have to take for its suppression they can count on the support and assistance of all law-abiding and loyal citizens of His Majesty."

#### The Rejoinder

I have very carefully read the Government's reply to my letter to His Excellency. I confess that I was totally unprepared for such an evasion of the realities of the case as the reply betrays. I will

take the very first repudiation. The reply says: "They (the Government) emphatically repudiate the statement that they have embarked on a policy of lawless repression and also the suggestion that the present campaign of civil disobedience has been forced on the non-co-operation party in order to secure the elementary rights of free association, free speech and a free Press." Even a cursory glance at my letter would show that whilst civil disobedience was authorized by the All-India Congress Committee meeting held on the 4th November at Delhi, it had not commenced. I have made it clear in my letter that the contemplated mass civil disobedience was indefinitely postponed on account of the regrettable events of the 17th November in Bombay. That decision was duly published, and it is within the knowledge of the Government as also the public that Herculean efforts were being made to combat the still lingering violent tendency amongst the people. It is also within the knowledge of the Government and the public that a special form of pledge was devised to be signed by volunteers with the deliberate purpose of keeping out all but men of proved character. The primary object of these volunteers' associations was to inculcate amongst the masses the lessons of non-violence, and to keep the peace at all non-co-operation functions. Unfortunately the Government of India lost its head completely over the Bombay events, and perhaps still more over the very complete *hartal* on the same date at Calcutta. I do not wish to deny that there might have been some intimidation practised in Calcutta, but it was not, I venture to submit, the fact of intimidation but the irritation caused by the completeness of the *hartal* that maddened the Government of India, as also the Government of Bengal. Repression there was even before that time, but nothing was said or done in connection with it; but the repression that came in the wake of the notifications proclaiming the Criminal Law Amendment Act for the purpose of dealing with volunteer associations, and Seditious Meetings Act for the purpose of dealing with public meetings held by non-co-operators, came upon the non-co-operation community as a bomb-shell. I repeat, then, that these notifications and the arrests of Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in Bengal, the arrest of Pandit Motilal Nehru and his co-workers in the U.P., and Lala Lajpatrai and his party in the Punjab made it absolutely necessary to take up not yet aggressive civil disobedience but only defensive civil disobedience, otherwise described as Passive Resistance. Even Sir Hormusjee Wadia was obliged to declare that if the Bombay Government followed the precedents set by the Governments of Bengal, U.P. and the Punjab, he would be bound to resist such notifications, that is, to enrol himself as a volunteer, or to attend public meetings in defiance of Government orders to the contrary. It is thus clear that a case has been completely made out for civil disobedience unless the Government revises its policy which has resulted in the stopping of

public meetings, public associations, and the non-co-operation Press in many parts of India.

### Facts beyond Challenge

Now for the statement that the Government 'have embarked on a policy of lawless repression'. Instead of an ample expression of regret and apology for the barbarous deeds that have been committed by officials in the name of law and order, I regret to find in the Government reply a categorical denial of any 'lawless repression'. In this connection I urge the public and Government carefully to consider the following facts, whose substance is beyond challenge.

(1) The official shooting at Entally in Calcutta and the callous treatment even of a corpse;

(2) The admitted brutality of the Civil Guards;

(3) The forcible dispersal of a meeting at Dacca, and the dragging of innocent men by their legs, although they had given no offence or cause whatsoever;

(4) Similar treatment of volunteers in Aligarh;

(5) The conclusive (in my opinion) findings of the committee presided over by Dr Gokulchand Narang about the brutal and uncalled for assaults upon volunteers and the public in Lahore;

(6) Wicked and inhuman treatment of volunteers and the public at Jullunder;

(7) The shooting of a boy at Dehra Dun, and cruelly forcible dispersal of a public meeting at that place;

(8) The looting admitted by the Bihar Government of villages by an officer and his company without any permission whatsoever from any one, but as stated by non-co-operators at the invitation of a planter, and the assaults upon volunteers and burning of *khaddar* and papers belonging to the Congress at Sonepur;

(9) Midnight searches and arrests in Congress and Khilafat offices.

I have merely given a sample of the many "infallible proofs" of official lawlessness and barbarism. I have mentioned not even a tithe of what is happening all over the country, and I wish to state without fear of successful contradiction that the scale on which this lawlessness has gone on in so many Provinces of India puts into shade the inhumanities that were practised in the Punjab, if we except the crawling order and the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh. It is my certain conviction that the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh was a clean transaction compared to the unclean transactions described above, and the pity of it is that because people are not shot or butchered the experiences through which hundreds of inoffensive men have gone through do not produce a shock sufficient to turn everybody's face against this Government, but as if this warfare against innocence was not enough, the reins are tightened in the jails. We



know nothing of what is happening today in the Karachi jail, to a solitary prisoner in the Sabarmati jail and to a batch in the Banaras jail, all of whom are as innocent as I claim to be myself. Their crime consists in their constituting themselves trustees of national honour and dignity. I am hoping that these proud and defiant workers will not be bent into submission to insolence masquerading in the official garb. I deny the right of the authorities to insist on high-souled men appearing before them almost naked, or pay any obsequious respect to them by way of salaaming with open palms brought together, or rising to the intonation of "*Sarkar ek hai*". No God-fearing man will do the latter even if he has to be kept standing in stocks for days and nights as a Bengal schoolmaster is reported to have been.

For the sake of the dignity of human nature I trust that Lord Reading and his draftsmen do not know the facts that have been adduced, or that being carried away by their belief in the infallibility of their employees, refuse to believe in the statements which the public regard as God's truth. If there is the slightest exaggeration in the statements that I have made, I shall as publicly withdraw them, and apologize for them, as I am making them now, but as it is I undertake to prove the substance of every one of these charges if not the very letter, and much more of them, before any impartial tribunal of men or women unconnected with the Government. I invite Pandit Malaviyaji and those who are performing the thankless task of securing a Round Table Conference to form an impartial commission to investigate these charges by which I stand or fall.

It is the physical and brutal ill-treatment of humanity which has made many of my co-workers and myself impatient of life itself, and in the face of these things I do not wish to take public time by dealing in detail with what I mean abuse of the common law of the country. But I cannot help correcting the wrong impression which is likely to be created in connection with the Bombay disorders. Disgraceful and deplorable as they were, let it be remembered that of the 53 persons who lost their lives over 45 were non-co-operators or their sympathizers the hooligans, and of the 400 wounded, to be absolutely on the safe side, over 350 were also derived from the same class. I do not complain. The non-co-operators and the friendly hooligans got what they deserved. They began the violence—they reaped the reward. Let it also not be forgotten that with all deference to the Bombay Government it was non-co-operators, ably assisted by Independents and Co-operators, who brought peace out of that chaos of the two days following the fateful 17th.

I must totally deny the imputation that "the application of the Criminal Law Amendment Act was confined to associations the majority of the members of which had habitually indulged in violence and intimidation." The prisons of India today hold some of the most

inoffensive men and hardly any of whom have either resorted to violence or intimidation, and who are convicted under that law. Abundant proof can be produced in support of this statement as also of the statement of the fact that almost wherever meetings have been broken up there was absolutely no risk of violence.

The Government of India deny that the Viceroy had laid down upon the apology of the Ali Brothers the civilized policy of non-interference with the non-violent activities of non-co-operators. I am extremely sorry for this repudiation. The very part of the communique reproduced in the reply is, in my opinion, sufficient proof that the Government did not intend to interfere with such activities. The Government did not wish it to be inferred that "speeches promoting disaffection of a less violent character were not an offence against the law." I have never stated that breach of any law was not to be an offence against it, but I have stated, as I repeat now, that it was not the intention of the Government then to prosecute for non-violent activities, although they amounted to a technical breach of the law.

#### Conditions of Round Table Conference

As to conditions of the conference the Government reply evidently omits to mention the two words *and otherwise* after the words *Calcutta speech*, in my letter. I repeat that the terms as I could gather from "the Calcutta speech and otherwise" were nearly the same that were mentioned in the resolutions of the Malaviya Conference. What are called unlawful activities of the non-co-operation party being a reply to the notifications of the Government would have ceased automatically with the withdrawal of those notifications, because the formation of volunteer corps and public meetings would not be unlawful activities after the withdrawal of the offending notifications. Even while the negotiations were going on in Calcutta the discharge of Futwa prisoners was asked for, and I can only repeat what I have said elsewhere that if it is disloyal to say that military or any service under the existing system of Government is a sin against God and humanity, I fear that such disloyalty must continue.

The Government communique does me a cruel wrong by imputing to me a desire that the proposed Round Table Conference should be called "merely to register my decrees". I did state in order to avoid any misunderstanding the Congress demands, as I feel I was in duty bound, in as clear terms as possible. No Congressman could approach any conference without making his position clear. I expected the ordinary courtesy of not considering me or any Congressman to be impervious to reason and argument. It is open to anybody to convince me that the demands of the Congress regarding Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj are wrong or unreasonable, and I would certainly retrace my steps, and so far as I am concerned, rectify the wrong. The Government of India know that such has been always my attitude.

The communique, strangely enough, says that the demands set forth in my manifesto are even larger than those of the Working Committee. I claim that they fall far below the demands of the Working Committee, for what I now ask against total suspension of civil disobedience of an aggressive character is merely the stoppage of ruthless repression, the release of prisoners convicted under it, and a clear declaration of policy. The demands of the Working Committee included a Round Table Conference. In my manifesto I have not asked for a Round Table Conference at all. It is true that this waiving of a Round Table Conference does not proceed from any expedience, but it is a confession of present weakness. I freely recognize that unless India becomes saturated with the spirit of non-violence and generates disciplined strength that can only come from non-violence, she cannot enforce her demands, and it is for that reason that I now consider that the first thing for the people to do is to secure a reversal of this mad repression and then to concentrate upon more complete organization and more construction, and here again the communique does me an injustice by merely stating that civil disobedience of an aggressive character will be postponed until the opportunity is given to the imprisoned leaders of reviewing the whole situation after their discharge, and by conveniently omitting to mention the following concluding sentences of my letter:

"If the Government make the requested declaration, I shall regard it as an honest desire on its part to give effect to public opinion, and shall therefore have no hesitation in advising the country to be engaged in further moulding public opinion without violent restraint from either side, and trust to its working to secure the fulfilment of its unalterable demands. Aggressive civil disobedience in that case will be taken up only when the Government departs from its policy of strictest neutrality, or refuses to yield to clearly expressed opinion of the vast majority of the people of India."

I venture to claim extreme reasonableness and moderation for the above presentation of the case.

#### **The Alternative before People**

The alternative before the people therefore is not, as the communique concludes, "between lawlessness with all its disastrous consequences on the one hand and on the other, the maintenance of those principles which lie at the root of all civilized Governments." "Mass civil disobedience", it adds "is fraught with such danger to the State that it must be met with sternness and severity." The choice before the people is mass civil disobedience with all its undoubted dangers, and lawless repression of lawful activities of the people. I hold that it is impossible for any body of self-respecting men for fear of unknown dangers, to sit still and do nothing effective whilst looting of property and assaulting of innocent men are going on all over the country in the name of law and order."

Bardoli, 7-2-22

M. K. GANDHI

## CHAPTER XXXI

## DEPARTURE FOR BARDOLI

The diary of incidents which I give below would describe Mahatmaji's daily activities, and all that I generally observed, during this period.

*18th to 26th January :*

Returning to the Ashram from Bombay where he had gone to attend the Malaviya Conference, Mahatmaji rested for three or four days, and then decided to start for Bardoli on the 26th January. Sheth Jamnalal Bajaj, who had accompanied him to Sabarmati, left for Wardha on the 24th. Many letters were being received by Mahatmaji cautioning him against any indiscriminate or hasty step. The following short answer given by him on 21st January to a very particular friend of his would indicate the working of his mind at the time.

My dear —,

I assure you that I shall take no hasty step. I am constantly praying for light and guidance.

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. Gandhi.

And now, as the day of Mahatmaji's leaving for Bardoli drew near, the ceremony of leave-taking started afresh at the Ashram. Under the leadership of Ba, the women of the Ashram came in a body to meet him and take his directions about their duty in his absence. The students of the Ashram also saw him one day by appointment. He advised every one of them to concentrate on the *charkha* alone. On the evening of 28th January, the male members of the Ashram assembled in Mahatmaji's room to take his advice about their future activities. Mahatmaji wanted to know their opinion about the Ashram as an institution. In the course of the discussion that followed some said that the discipline of the Ashram was so rigorous that it hindered the growth of individuality among the

members, while others held the opposite view and said that the rigour and discipline having slackened, the spiritual atmosphere of the Ashram had been adversely affected. Mahatmaji whole-heartedly joined in this discussion, and concluded by advising the members to strive to maintain the ideal which was behind the establishment of this Ashram, viz., that of serving India through truth and non-violence. Then after the early morning prayer on the 26th, he took what appeared to be a final leave of the members of the Ashram, and addressing them said that he did not know when he would return, or whether it would be possible for him to return at all. He explained that without true sacrifice and renunciation there could be no real service of India, and that true sacrifice and renunciation was possible only when one had developed spiritual power. He, therefore, advised the members to build their lives according to the ideal of the *Gita*. These words of Mahatmaji overwhelmed the Ashram people with sorrow and grief because of their fear that these might be the last words of advice they were privileged to hear from the lips of their Master.

*27th January :*

We left the Ashram on the night of the 26th January and reached Surat early in the morning of the 27th (6 a.m.). We had to change the train here for Bardoli. Before starting from the Ashram, Mahatmaji had told me that I should take the fewest things possible. We were going to the front, I thought, and there was no knowing how events would shape themselves. That, I imagined, was the reason for Mahatmaji's asking me to leave behind all things except those needed for immediate use.

As the train for Bardoli was about to leave Surat station, several people came running to inform me that I was required by Mahatmaji. I went to him immediately, when he said he had received a wire from Bombay containing requests from Shris Jinnah and Ambalal Sarabhai that he should leave for Bombay that very night. He said he would go, and then return to Bardoli on the 29th morning. As for me, his decision was that I should stay

at Bardoli instead of accompanying him. Then, after a short pause, he said, "Bardoli will be our head-quarters now. I shall arrange some quiet place for you where you can work uninterruptedly. You must try to write something for *Young India* every day." I replied that as he had desired that all heavy luggage should be left behind I had not carried the files and papers. He said, "You may send for them at once."

A whole crowd of volunteers had come from Bardoli to escort Mahatmaji to their place, and filled up the train from one end to another. There was no limit to their joy and enthusiasm, finding that Mahatmaji was going to lead them in their struggle for India's freedom. They began to sing a song in chorus, the refrain of which was, "Bardoli is India's Thermopylæ." The song praised the heroism of the ancient Greeks, who by their sacrifice and dauntless courage succeeded in thwarting the Persian Empire, and ended with a prayer that Bardoli might similarly be privileged to free India from the thralldom of the powerful British Government. We reached Bardoli at about 10 a.m. and went to our camp at the "Swaraj Ashram", situated near the railway station. Mahatmaji left for Bombay the very same evening.

*28th January :*

Mahatmaji having gone to Bombay, I remained buried under my papers the whole of the day, clearing up arrears of work. He had given me a separate room at a little distance from his own, which deprived me of the privilege of doing some personal service to him. His third son Ramadas was looking after him. Shri V. J. Patel, then General Secretary of the Congress, had also come to Bardoli. Shri Dayalji, Kalyanji and Kunvarji were the three principal leaders of the Bardoli people. Kunvarji was the President of the Bardoli Taluka Parishad.

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CHAPTER XXXII  
BARDOLI'S DECISION

*29th January :*

Mahatmaji returned from Bombay by the morning train. Shri Jinnah and other members of the committee appointed by the Malaviya Conference pressed him hard to postpone the proposed civil disobedience at Bardoli for a further period, but without any effect. The Bardoli Taluka Conference held its session today. Although thousands of representatives from all sides of the taluka had assembled at Bardoli on this occasion, their training and discipline was so admirable that they never came to flock round Mahatmaji's lodging, as was generally done by crowds elsewhere in India. In fact, one never felt that there was such a huge influx of people from other parts of the taluka at Bardoli. Before going to attend this conference Mahatmaji met the workers in a private meeting held at his residence, and tried to persuade them to take an extension of fifteen days' time to fulfil to his entire satisfaction the condition about making Bardoli self-contained in respect of its production of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. But the workers were unyielding. They promised that from the 1st of February (1922), they would not import any cloth from outside the taluka, and would hold themselves responsible for clothing the 85,000 people of the taluka with *khaddar* produced within the taluka itself. All round the "Swaraj Ashram" (Mahatmaji's residence) numbers of spinning wheels were lying arranged in heaps, and bullock-carts would come from the surrounding villages every now and then, and would return to their destinations loaded with these wheels. The workers used to say, these were their machine guns.

The main conference of the representatives of Bardoli assembled in the afternoon in a pandal specially erected for the occasion at a little distance from Mahatmaji's resi-

dence. The order and discipline shown by the crowd at the conference were remarkable. Every one of the men and women assembled there seemed to know his or her mind thoroughly well, and they adopted a resolution intimating the Congress Working Committee that they were prepared immediately to start civil disobedience for the satisfaction of the demands of the Congress. Conditions of inter-communal unity, non-violence, adoption of the *charkha* and *khaddar* and removal of untouchability by Hindus were included in this resolution as indispensable for mass civil disobedience. Mahatmaji added two very expressive words to the condition of non-violence, viz., *patience and endurance*, and their implications were brought out when it was explained to the villagers that in the event of their starting civil disobedience they would have to suffer imprisonment, their properties would be confiscated, and what was more, they might even have to surrender their lives; and yet those four thousand representatives were unanimous in their resolve to continue the struggle. The resolution then advised those inhabitants of Bardoli who agreed to join the campaign of civil disobedience, and abide by the conditions laid down by the Congress, to withhold payment of their taxes. The full text of the resolution was as follows:

"This conference is of opinion—

(a) That for the redress of India's grievances, unity among Hindus, Mohammedans, Parsis, Christians and other communities of India is absolutely necessary.

(b) That non-violence, patience and endurance are the only remedy for the redress of the said grievances.

(c) That the use of the spinning wheel in every home, and the adoption of hand-spun and hand-woven garments to the exclusion of all other cloth by every individual are indispensable for India's freedom.

(d) That Swaraj is impossible without complete removal of untouchability by the Hindus.

(e) That for the people's progress and for the attainment of freedom, readiness to sacrifice movable and immovable property, to suffer imprisonment and, if necessary, to lay down one's life, is indispensable.

"This conference hopes that the Bardoli Taluka will have the privilege to be the first for the aforesaid sacrifices, and this



conference hereby respectfully informs the Working Committee that unless the Working Committee otherwise decides, or unless the proposed Round Table Conference is held, this taluka will immediately commence mass civil disobedience, under the advice and guidance of Shri Gandhi and the President of the conference.

"This conference recommends that those tax-payers of the taluka, who are ready and willing to abide by the conditions laid down by the Congress for mass civil disobedience, will refrain, till further instruction, from paying land revenue and other taxes due to the Government."

*30th January :*

To-day is Monday, the day of Mahatmaji's silence. Nobody is present near him today. I went and sat in his room for a few hours and did some writing work. To-day Mahatmaji addressed the following letter in Gujarati to the Patels \* of Bardoli, which was printed and circulated throughout the taluka.

"To the Patels of Bardoli,

"By a resolution adopted yesterday, the Bardoli Taluka Parishad has committed itself to a very serious and solemn duty and has taken a grave responsibility on its shoulders. I trust that in this sacred work of regenerating the country, the Patels of Bardoli would fulfil to the fullest extent their part of the duty. Many of them have expressed their readiness to tender resignation. I hope that from now every Patel would begin to consider himself no longer a Patel under the Government (British), but a Patel under Swaraj (Indian self-rule). I, therefore, expect that their letters of resignation would be placed at our disposal without delay.

"I have not yet lost hope that the Government would become penitent, and purify itself. I therefore do not propose to submit the letters of resignation immediately. But the moment civil disobedience was declared, we must be ready with our resignations, and must be in a position to submit them at once. That is to say, our preparations should be complete, so that we may not be caught napping. I therefore expect that every Patel would come here without delay, and personally deliver his letter of resignation to us."

MOHANDAS K. GANDHI "

Bardoli,  
30th January, 1922

(Some chapters are omitted here. — Ed.)

\* Patels are headmen of villages, who help in the realization of Government dues from the villagers.

Relevant portions of an interview with the representative of the *Bombay Chronicle* are printed below. From this the reader will be able to have an insight into the projected campaign of civil disobedience at Bardoli, and also the reason for Mahatmaji's selecting Bardoli to the exclusion of other places, for conducting this campaign. In the next succeeding chapter the reader will also find translations of portions of two articles from the Gujarati *Navajivan* dealing with Bardoli. While describing the reasons for Bardoli's precedence over other parts of India for the purpose of civil disobedience, Mahatmaji has explained in these articles the real character of the struggle in which India was then engaged, and the vital need of non-violence for the realization of India's goal.

**Interview with a representative of the  
*Bombay Chronicle***

**Q. :** Do you expect to be arrested the moment Bardoli begins mass civil disobedience, and are you convinced after your stay in Bardoli for over a week that the movement will not collapse in your absence ?

**Mahatmaji :** It is very difficult to say what Government will do to me when the time-limit expires. But I certainly do not expect the people of Bardoli to collapse immediately I am arrested. But if they do collapse Government's action in arresting me will be certainly justified by reason of any such weakening. If India is really ready then my arrest like the arrests of all other workers must result in non-co-operation activities being stimulated, and the atmosphere of non-violence being retained. Personally, I have no misgivings on the point, but it is difficult for anybody to say with certainty what will happen after my arrest. There is so much superstition regarding my supposed powers, human and super-human, that sometimes I feel that my imprisonment, deportation and execution would be quite justified. This belief in the possession of super-human powers by me is really a bar to national progress, and Government will deserve the thanks of reasonable humanity if they remove me from the people's midst, and do not afterwards become mad themselves, but deal

with people with justice and without terrorism. But recent events do not fill me with any such hope about the Government.

Q.: Can you still maintain in the face of cases of assault and flogging, and still many more sufferings on an extensive scale in the future, that the present movement is the shortest cut to Swaraj with the minimum of suffering?

*Mahatmaji*: I have no doubt about it, because painful as the sufferings are, they would be still more painful if there was retaliation on the part of the people. If people remain sufficiently non-violent, Government efforts would be exhausted for want of reaction. It is a scientific truth which admits of no exception. Therefore, whatever sufferings the people might have to go through now would be a hundred times greater, if they offered violence against Government violence.

Q.: May I know if the sufferings of hundreds of young men in jails weigh upon your decision to take steps regarding mass civil disobedience? Do you not think that they should be honourably acquitted as early as possible, having gained all that they fought for?

*Mahatmaji*: Certainly; and therefore it is that I have made their release and stoppage of all barbarity the exclusive issue for mass civil disobedience at the present moment.

Q.: Do you not expect Government to baffle your attempts by conniving at your mass civil disobedience activities at least for a long time to come? Can they not forgo their land revenue, or postpone it till some distant day, rather than precipitate an undesirable situation. What steps do you propose to take in that case.

*Mahatmaji*: Government can certainly do that. If they do so, I will respect their wisdom and restraint by refraining from taking any irritating action. But that really means that Bardoli having attained her freedom, her example would be infectious, and unless Government want to yield to popular opinion they will make it a point of prestige to collect revenue at the point of the bayonet.

Q.: Are you convinced that Bardoli is really fit to undertake civil disobedience? Has Bardoli become self-sufficient so far as production of pure *khadi* is concerned?

*Mahatmaji*: So far as I can see, I certainly think that Bardoli is fit. No taluka is so much insured against non-violence as Bardoli is, and this assurance has undoubtedly counted with me a great deal in making up my mind. It has not been self-sufficient as yet in regard to its production of *khaddar*, but it will be so presently. People are willing, but further organization is necessary.

Q.: May I know, if you do not mind, what is going to be your first move in respect of mass civil disobedience?

*Mahatmaji*: My first move naturally would be to consolidate the movement for non-payment, and then I shall have to see in what other directions I can offer civil disobedience without any danger of violence. You will remember, I have the whole of the Statute Book to break through, save those portions which are also a part of the moral government of the universe.

### CHAPTER XXXIII BARDOLI'S CLAIMS

#### I

[Being translation of portions of two articles in Gujarati by Mahatmaji appearing in his weekly paper the *Navajivan*.]

"The people of Bardoli are plain, simple folks; they know no luxury. They are not rich, neither are they very poor. They are not an unruly people, and yet they are no cowards. It is not their habit to engage in social, internecine quarrels. Their relation with the Government has been always sweet. They have no local grievances. They have decided to enter this fearful struggle with no other motive but offering themselves as willing sacrifices for the sake of India, and have been trying their best to qualify themselves in terms of the Congress resolution. Although they have not entirely fulfilled the condition about *khaddar*, viz., of becoming self-contained in respect of their production of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth, they have now concentrated their efforts to that end. I do not know of any other part of India where the curse of untouchability has been removed to the same extent as at Bardoli. Therefore, I hold

that if there is any taluka qualified to undertake this struggle, that is Bardoli.

"Some might imagine that the people of Bardoli being mild, docile and peaceful, would easily get demoralized when they are imprisoned; would fear death, and would surrender themselves when the Government should begin to confiscate their property. But my previous experience tells me that it was only the people of this nature who could suffer persecution without retaliation, and without creating any disturbance. Those who are by nature unruly and excitable cannot suffer much pain; they become anxious to inflict pain on others, rather than suffer it themselves.

"It is time that people realized that only mild and docile people should enlist themselves on our side in this battle. This battle is not intended to make mild people unruly, but to make them brave and fearless. On the other hand, it is intended to make unruly and riotous people docile, mild and peaceful. If any one should imagine that we can achieve victory in this war by filling the gaols with people of mischievous or disreputable character, then I must declare at once that our defeat will begin from the moment the movement takes that turn; because in that case the leadership will pass into the hands of mischievous people, and the law that 'might is right' will begin to hold its sway in the land.

"Riots, double-dealing, pride, diplomacy, use of brute-force, these are the things that we want to avoid, and instal in their places non-violence, straightforwardness, truth and soul-force. It is for this reason that I advocate non-violence. Our ideal will be reached when non-violence is joined to fearlessness. I expect this kind of non-violence from Bardoli."

## II

"Bardoli is a small taluka; the people of this taluka have no learning; they do not understand politics; and they are as mild as lambs. This last is their special qualification. They have capacity to think for themselves; and they know how to discriminate between selfish and unselfish action. Those whose vision is clear need have no fear from this struggle. The lamb does not willingly advance towards the butcher; but when the people of Bardoli will welcome the prison, will allow their things to be confiscated with the faith of a child, and will accept death without any ill-feeling towards their persecutors, the whole world will bend itself to offer its homage to them. They will then achieve Swaraj for India, and their names will be indelibly written in letters of gold in the annals of Indian history.

"Although Ahmedabad is my place of residence, and considered, from the points of view of wealth, intellect or bravery, superior to Bardoli, still I have selected Bardoli for this campaign of civil disobedience. In this very choice lies the inwardness of this fight. Swaraj for India would come only when a mild and poor taluka like Bardoli would give an abiding illustration of her non-violence and courage.

This battle is intended to be conducted by humble and innocent people to save the weak and the oppressed from the persecution and exploitation of the strong and the powerful. That will be possible by Bardoli's victory. I am incapable of conducting this campaign either at Ahmedabad or at Bombay, in spite of all the wealth and glory of those places. For there I shall have always to guard myself against fraud and wickedness. Here at Bardoli I have no such fear. But if Bardoli also practises double-dealing with me, then God alone can say what my plight will be."

*6th February :*

Today is a Monday, and Mahatmaji is observing his silence. The morning train brought Shri V. J. Patel, who had gone to Bombay for a day, and Shri Andrews, from Bombay. Mahatmaji addressed to the people of Bardoli a manifesto in Gujarati, an English rendering of which is given below :

"Brothers and sisters of Bardoli,

I have decided to publish from time to time, and as regularly as possible, open letters like the one I am addressing you today, for informing you about things in general, and also for your guidance.

The responsibility that you and I have jointly taken is not a small one. The fact is that the whole weight of India now lies on our shoulders. You have made your choice to pass through this fiery ordeal for the sake of India.

You have of your own free will and choice decided to make the greatest sacrifice possible, and to fulfil your vow have been preparing yourself by a gradual process of purification.

May God bless your efforts. But you must remember also that God only helps those who help themselves.

It has given me very great pleasure to learn that the doors of eighteen national schools have been opened for admission of boys of the untouchable class to their rolls. So long as there is a single national school without untouchable boys, the resolution of the Taluka Parishad on this point must be regarded as not having been fully carried out.

Similarly, every household must have its spinning wheel, and every non-co-operator must discard all other cloth except hand-spun and hand-woven *khaddar*.

It is my desire that henceforward not a single enlightened tenant of Bardoli should submit his dues to the authorities. The Government may be permitted to confiscate all his belongings, if it so desires. We must be prepared to suffer this much of loss at any rate.

There are some who ask, 'What would happen if the Government took possession of all our lands, and drove us out of our hearths and homes?' My answer is that it does not appear to me likely that the Government would immediately take that extreme step, provided it desired to follow a civilized method in its war against the civil resisters. But we must not doubt that it has the power to do so. We must therefore be prepared to give up our hearths and homes, should the occasion demand it. Those who are determined to have Swaraj must be confident that their lands would be returned to them as soon as Swaraj was obtained. When there is a violent war, the warriors go to battle with this conviction in their minds that they would get back their possessions as soon as victory was attained. In this peaceful and non-violent war, the result should not and cannot be otherwise. We must therefore be prepared for the loss of our lands, when the battle is in progress.

This battle is based, firstly, on confidence in ourselves, and, secondly, on faith in God, and my heartfelt prayer is that all of you may possess that confidence and that faith.

Your servant and well-wisher,  
MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI."

7th February :

This morning Mahatmaji proposed during prayer time that he would regularly conduct a *Gita* class, and started to give the first lesson today. His method was to read a line of a *sloka* \* himself, and then to ask us to recite it in chorus. He was very particular about the true accent and pronunciation of Sanskrit words. He advised even those who did not understand the meaning of the *Gita* to practise regular recitation of the *slokas*, and commit them to memory. He seemed to have faith in the old Sanskrit saying, आवृत्तिः सर्वज्ञास्त्राणां बोधादपि गरीयसी । (Recitation of the *Shastras* is superior to even an understanding of their sense).

When the post arrived at about 10 in the morning, we found Lord Reading's communique in reply to Mahatmaji's ultimatum published in the daily papers. At the very outset of the communique His Excellency stated, "They (the Government) emphatically repudiate the statement that they have embarked on a policy of lawless repression."

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\* i.e. verse.

This statement took us by surprise. Mahatmaji immediately began to dictate his rejoinder to the Government communique, which was wired to the Associated Press at Delhi. One copy was sent to the *Bombay Chronicle* for publication, and Shri Bomanji, who left for Bombay this evening, took another copy with him.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

## CHAURICHAURA AND THE HALT

The 8th of February, 1922, is a memorable day in the political history of India. It was on the previous day that Mahatmaji had hurled defiance at the Government in his rejoinder to Lord Reading's communique issued in reply to the ultimatum from Bardoli. But on the 8th, he suddenly turned round, and decided that he must suspend all aggressive activities of the Congress directed towards mending or ending the present system of Government in India. When the newspapers of the day arrived at about 10 in the morning, the report about the gruesome incident at Chaurichaura at first escaped Mahatmaji's notice. But subsequently, perhaps in the course of a conversation with Shri V. J. Patel, his attention was drawn to it. Then, he sent for the papers again, and read the brief telegraphic report of an excited mob attacking the police station at Chaurichaura, setting fire to it, and burning to death a body of about twenty-one policemen. Mahatmaji was very much agitated when he read the news, and immediately decided that he should have to suspend all activities towards civil disobedience going on along the length and breadth of the country.

A few days before this incident he had been apprised by a report submitted by the U. P. Congress Committee that in the district of Gorakhpur alone (Chaurichaura is within that district), thirty-four thousand national volunteers had been enlisted, and the total number of volunteers in the whole province had gone up to more than a *lakh*. It also came to his knowledge that not even one-fourth of



the above number had taken to *khaddar* as their wear, the most essential condition a volunteer was required to observe under the rules laid down by the Congress. It could, therefore, be imagined that very few of them understood the secret of civil, that is, peaceful disobedience. About this time, Mahatmajī had also received a letter with numerous signatures of small landholders of U. P., which stated that although they had been working heart and soul for the furtherance of the non-co-operation movement, their tenants had withheld payment of their dues, and had been threatening them with violence if they attempted to realize the same. Similarly, a big land-holder from U. P. informed Mahatmajī that he had been forced to take shelter under Government for safeguarding his own interest, and also for the protection of his family, inspite of his sympathies being with the 'national movement. From Bengal, a very well-known and popular Zamindar wrote to Mahatmajī saying that his dues had been withheld by his tenants. All this was thoroughly unauthorized activity, and was being pursued in contravention of the resolution of the Congress Working Committee, which had definitely declared that the Congress did not desire that the dues of Zamindars and landholders should in any case be withheld by their tenants.

Then, again, Mahatmajī learnt that a person named Motilal had made himself very popular among the Bhils of Rajputana by declaring himself a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. He had gathered a large following, and had started a campaign of non-payment of taxes against the State of Udaipur, and other Indian principalities of Rajputana. Pandit Ramakanta Malaviya, Minister of the Sirohi State, came one day and informed Mahatmajī that the emissaries of Motilal had been preaching among the Bhils of Sirohi that Mahatmajī's order was that none should pay any tax exceeding rupee one and four annas. Mahatmajī had no sort of acquaintance with, or knowledge of Motilal, and he was perturbed to learn that the latter had been utilizing his name for influencing and exciting

such an ignorant and primitive people as the Bhils of Rajputana.\*

Mahatmaji had, indeed, decided to start the campaign of non-payment of taxes at Bardoli, but at the same time he had been strongly advising that no such effort should be made in any other part of India, without his express permission previously obtained. He was strongly of opinion that civil non-payment could not be successfully carried on by those who were insubordinate, unruly and mischievous by nature, because it was not possible for them to maintain the non-violent character of the movement for any length of time. Similarly, he held that those who were habitually inclined to withhold payment of their taxes were unqualified to join a no-tax campaign, if it was to be conducted along peaceful lines. Therefore, according to him, it would be the height of unwisdom to start a campaign of non-payment simultaneously at many places, without first training the people along lines of non-violence and peace. Referring to this aspect of the matter, he thus wrote in an article in *Young India*, dated 26th January, 1922, entitled "Non-payment of Taxes":

"Even as civil disobedience is difficult in the case of a habitual offender against the laws of the State, so is *civil* non-payment difficult for those who have hitherto been in the habit of withholding payment of taxes on the slightest pretext. Civil non-payment of taxes is indeed the last stage in non-co-operation. We must not resort to it till we have tried the other forms of civil disobedience. And it will be the height of unwisdom to experiment with non-payment in large or many areas in the beginning stages."

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\* Later on Mahatmaji sent a messenger to Rajputana and ascertained that Motilal had introduced many reforms among the Bhils, such as prohibition of liquor and meat-eating, and that on the whole his influence had been beneficial for the Bhil community. But as he always kept himself surrounded by a large body of followers, the States of Rajputana looked upon him with suspicion. After Mahatmaji's arrest and imprisonment this movement of reform among the Bhils was forcibly suppressed by the States, and firearms were freely used against that helpless and submissive people.

Such were Mahatmaji's views on the matter. But information was pouring in from all sides that the cry for non-payment had been taken up by the people with ever-growing enthusiasm although the injunctions of the Congress were definitely against it. Besides, Mahatmaji came to know that in places like Jhajha, Bulandshahr and Saharanpur, the volunteers had taken possession of the municipal Town Halls without asking for sanction from the Working Committee. Ever since November (1921), when the idea of civil disobedience was first definitely mooted in the country in connection with the movement of non-co-operation, Mahatmaji had been harping upon the fact that he was the only expert in this method of political warfare, and that therefore no aggressive step should be taken anywhere except under his own personal supervision and guidance. He expected other workers to render him help and co-operation by remaining peaceful themselves, and by maintaining the peace of the country. A resolution of the Congress Working Committee (31st January, 1922) emphasized the very same view of Mahatmaji thus: "The Working Committee advises all other parts of India to co-operate with the people of Bardoli taluka by refraining from mass or individual civil disobedience of an aggressive character, except upon the express consent of Mahatma Gandhi previously obtained."

But the incidents of Bulandshahr and Saharanpur gave a clear indication that the Congress workers of those places did not consider it binding upon them to follow the instruction of this resolution. It was also within Mahatmaji's knowledge that preparations were going on at many places to start aggressive civil disobedience as soon as Bardoli had started it, although this would have involved a defiance of the injunctions of the Congress Working Committee. All these defects and limitations in our organization had been no doubt oppressing him; but he had expected to remedy them gradually, when the Chaurichaura incident came as a bolt from the blue, and shattered his hopes to pieces. He at once proceeded to restrain with a stern and determined hand, the rising tide

of discontent and disobedience in all parts of the country. For it was clear to him as daylight that if while going to disobey the laws of the Government, the authority of the Congress was thrown overboard, there would be nothing to prevent anarchy and chaos overtaking the land.

The civil disobedience at Bardoli, as the reader is aware, was to have been started on the 12th February (1922), on the expiry of the time-limit granted to the Viceroy to reconsider the position of the Government in respect of the demands set forth in Mahatmaji's ultimatum. But Mahatmaji suddenly changed his whole plan of action on the 8th, and on the same day circulated a private letter to the members of the Working Committee indicating this change. A meeting of the Working Committee was thereupon summoned to meet at Bardoli on 11th February. Then, on receipt of a telegram from Pandit Malaviya, he left for Bombay by the evening train of the 8th. The private communication from Mahatmaji to members of the Working Committee referred to above is published below :

*Confidential* (not for publication)

Bardoli,  
8th February, 1922.

Dear Friend,

This is the third time that I have received a rude shock when I have been on the eve of embarking upon mass civil disobedience. The first was in April 1919, the second in November last, and now again I am violently agitated by the events in the Gorakhpur District. What has happened in Bareilly and Saharanpur where volunteers have been attempting to take possession of Town Halls has added considerably to the shaking. The civil disobedience of Bardoli can make no impression upon the country when disobedience of a criminal character goes on in other parts of the country, both for the same end. The whole conception of civil disobedience is based upon the assumption that it works in and through its completely non-violent character. I may be a bad student of human nature to believe that such an atmosphere can ever be brought about in a vast country like India, but that would be an argument for condemning my capacity for sound judgment, not for continuing a movement which is in that case bound to be unsuccessful. I personally can never be party to a movement half violent and half non-violent, even though it may result in the attainment of so-called Swaraj, for it will not be real

Swaraj as I have conceived it. A meeting of the Working Committee is therefore being called to consider the question on the 11th instant at Bardoli, first whether mass civil disobedience should not be suspended for the time being; and secondly, whether if it is suspended it should not be discontinued for a definite and sufficiently long period to enable the country to do organizing constructive work and to establish an indisputably non-violent atmosphere. I want to have the guidance of all the friends I can. I would like you to send me your opinion even though you may not be able to attend, either by letter, if it reaches in time, or by wire.

I am sending this letter only to the members of the Working Committee, but I would like you to consult all the friends you meet and if any of them wishes to come to take part in the deliberations please bring or send him, or them.

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. GANDHI

The subsequent daily incidents are described below in the form of a diary, the facts being taken from notes and letters written by me at the time :

*9th February :*

Mahatmaji has gone to Bombay at the invitation of Pandit Malaviya. That he had suddenly changed his mind about starting civil disobedience at Bardoli was not known to more than two or three of his most intimate associates even at Bardoli. The general impression was that the campaign would be started on the 12th, and so people from outside have begun to assemble at Bardoli. The evening train brought Shri Shankarlal Banker, Shri Gokhale of the *Maratha* of Poona, Shri Mandlik of the *Lokamanya* of Bombay, Imam Saheb of Sabarmati Ashram, and a host of others whom I did not know. Shri Gokhale said they had all come to see the beginning of the memorable battle to be started on the 12th. Then, he enquired whether the Chaurichaura incident had produced any adverse effect on Mahatmaji's mind. I avoided a direct answer to this query, and merely said that the Working Committee had been summoned to meet on the 11th when the matter would be finally decided. Shri Banker, however, who had access to Mahatmaji's papers saw the confidential letter that had been circulated to members of the Working

Committee, and came to know that Mahatmaji had contemplated a complete change of plan.

*10th February :*

Mahatmaji returned from Bombay by the morning train. The same train brought to Bardoli Shri Bomanji, Shri Vallabhbhai Patel, Mathuradas Trikamji, and a crowd of other people. Mahatmaji invited Pandit Malaviyaji, and Shri Natarajan and Shri Jayakar to come to Bardoli to attend the meeting of the Working Committee to be held tomorrow. Intimation was received about Shri Kelkar coming tomorrow. Sheth Jamnalal Bajaj came from Wardha by the evening train.

A messenger from Gorakhpur came today with detailed information about Chaurichaura, and described the whole incident to Mahatmaji. Shri Shuaib Qureshi was asked to take down his statement. Another young man came from U. P., who finding Mahatmaji alone for a while quietly went up to him, and enquired — “Sir, when will you order the lands owned and controlled by the Zamindars to be distributed among the tenants?” Mahatmaji was very much annoyed at the question, and rebuked the young man, and asked him as to who had taught him that he (Mahatmaji) desired the lands belonging to the Zamindars to be distributed. The young man was taken aback by the vehemence with which Mahatmaji expressed his disgust, and immediately left his presence.

## CHAPTER XXXV

SUSPENSION OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND THE  
REACTION

This afternoon Mahatmaji summoned to his room the whole body of workers, and all those who were present at Bardoli today, to discuss with him the propriety or otherwise of starting civil disobedience in the face of the terrible happening at Chaurichaura. He asked for the opinion of every one present. There were two young boys, who had come into the room perhaps out of childish curiosity, but they were also asked by Mahatmaji to express their views. Starting with Shri V. J. Patel, Shri Bomanji, Gokhale, Mandlik and Dayalji, almost every one, young and old, declared with one united voice that it was unthinkable to suspend the fight at that stage; that if Mahatmaji retreated after throwing out a challenge to Lord Reading in the manner he had done by his rejoinder to the Government communique, the whole country would be disgraced before the world. Only three persons dissented from this view, and said that the temper of the country had risen, and that the starting of civil disobedience under that condition might bring about other and more terrible catastrophes. One of them specially emphasized that the people had become so much infuriated that he would not be surprised if they went to wreck their vengeance upon the Moderates and massacre them upon their failure to do any direct injury to the Government.

Mahatmaji gave a very patient hearing to all the views and opinions brought forward before the meeting, and then said: "I regard those who have assembled here as some of the best workers in the country. In fact, I can see the condition of India at the present time truly reflected by this small assembly. What I have heard now confirms me in the belief that most of those who are present here have failed to understand the message of non-violence.

"This convinces me that the country at large has not at all accepted the teaching of non-violence. I must, therefore, immediately stop the movement for civil disobedience."

As soon as he finished this observation, Mahatmaji adopted a grave, and somewhat stern attitude, which made the workers quietly leave his room, one by one. The knowledge that Mahatmaji had finally made up his mind to suspend civil disobedience caused a deep dejection in their spirits. Those who had been trifling with the Chauri-chaura incident by saying that it was not worthy of being taken into consideration, or had been joking with observations that life became insipid without some excitement, without some exhibition of violence in moderate form, now thought that perhaps their light-hearted talks on the subject had brought about a catastrophic change in Mahatmaji's mind. They began to feel that their hopes and dreams had been shattered to pieces. The shock had been so great that it seemed to have temporarily unhinged one prominent gentleman, who began to move about the whole camp, shouting at the top of his voice, 'Why should violence be so much deprecated?', 'what harm if there was a little justifiable violence, here and there?' These were the words constantly on his lips, and he stopped every one, who happened to come near him, to argue the point with him. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, who had arrived by the evening train, found the whole camp in a state of confusion and disorder. He came to my room, and asked me, "Krishnadasji, what is your opinion?" I replied, "So far as I can see, the advocates of violence were gathering strength under Mahatmaji's aegis, and unless they are isolated, it will be difficult to keep the movement non-violent, or to fulfil the object for which Mahatmaji has been working." He agreed with me, and went straight and engaged himself in an argumentative combat with the gentleman, who had made himself so prominent over the matter.

...Mahatmaji's grave demeanour, indicating, as it did, the agony from which he was suffering, was to us a source of much apprehension. Whispers were going round the



camp that he had been contemplating a two weeks' fast in expiation of the crime of Chaurichaura. This frightened us considerably, as we did not know whether his frail body was capable of sustaining the effects of such a prolonged fast. At night Mathuradas found an opportunity of asking Mahatmaji whether he was seriously thinking of giving up his body. He replied, "No ; I imagine God has yet some purpose to serve with this body. I have no desire to give up the body immediately."

*11th February :*

The Congress Working Committee meets today. The first thing Mahatmaji did in the morning was to draft a resolution suspending the projected civil disobedience at Bardoli, and all other aggressive activities going on throughout the country. He then asked me to give the draft to Shri Shuaib for his opinion. A little while later I saw Shri Shuaib coming to Mahatmaji's room very much alarmed and agitated. Meeting me on the way he said that he knew it was impossible to dislodge Gandhiji from a position once he (Gandhiji) had made up his mind ; but still he must try. He, indeed, tried his best to persuade Mahatmaji to tone down the terms of the resolution, but without any effect.

Then, the morning train arrived. The people who came from outside and assembled in Mahatmaji's camp were so numerous that the place put on the appearance of a busy fair. Among the invited guests came Pandit Malaviya, and Shri Jayakar and Shri Natarajan from Bombay. Shri Chhotani, Moazzam Ali, Zahur Ahmed, and a few others came on behalf of the Central Khilafat Committee. Those among the new-comers who held the non-co-operation view looked absolutely helpless and bewildered, when they came to learn Mahatmaji's final decision. Some of them tried to induce Mahatmaji not to suspend civil disobedience in a hurry. But Mahatmaji was adamant.

Before the Working Committee sat for its deliberations, there was a general informal meeting of all people assembled at Bardoli on that day. Pandit Malaviyaji, Shri Natarajan, Jayakar, Moazzam Ali and Zahur Ahmed

expressed their opinions on the situation. Pandit Malaviyaji, who spoke first, said that the foresight shown by Mahatmaji in suspending civil disobedience in the atmosphere of excitement then prevailing in the country was simply incomparable. By this one act of his, Mahatmaji had established his title to greatness for all time, and would be remembered by posterity as a great benefactor of India. Shri Jayakar said that it was his firm belief that except Mahatmaji there was no one else in this world who could have ventured to suspend civil disobedience in that situation. The sacrifice, determination, strength of will, and devotion to truth shown by him in this connection was bound to instal him in the niche of history as one of the greatest men the world has produced. Shri Natarajan concurred with all that the preceding speakers had said. But Shri Moazzam Ali and Zahur Ahmed echoed the chagrin and disappointment felt by the non-co-operators at this unexpected turn of events.

The Working Committee then held its sitting in camera, and adopted the resolution advocating suspension of all aggressive activities of the Congress, which Mahatmaji had placed before it. The Committee then decided to call a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee either at Bombay or at Delhi at an early date to consider the decision of the Working Committee. Thus ended the meeting that gave birth to the famous Bardoli decision. In the evening Shri Shankarlal Banker suggested to Mahatmaji that all aggressive activities having been suspended, the people might feel that they had been left suspended in mid-air, and that there must be some programme which would harness their energies and direct them towards some constructive effort. Mahatmaji agreed and said he would think over the problem.

*12th February :*

The excessive strain of the last three days has greatly told upon Mahatmaji's health. Since the information about the disaster at Chaurichaura reached him, he has not known any rest or peace, and appeared to be filled with remorse and grief. The amount of moral and mental

strength required to fight against his own followers over the question of the suspension of civil disobedience, and finally to carry out his resolve against the opposition of almost all his intimate friends and supporters could better be imagined than described. This morning he drafted his famous constructive programme. Shri Kelkar, who came to take Mahatmaji's leave before his departure by the morning train, looked very thoughtful and much depressed over the sudden and unfortunate turn of affairs. Mahatmaji was then taking his morning repast, and requested Shri Kelkar to join and have some fruit, and tried various ways to soothe Shri Kelkar's feelings. Finally, as Shri Kelkar rose to leave, Mahatmaji imploringly requested the latter not to grieve over the disaster. Then, about noon, a second sitting of the Working Committee was held to consider and adopt the constructive programme framed by Mahatmaji. Pandit Malaviyaji was invited to attend this meeting of the Committee. Panditji, although not a member of the Committee made many suggestions, some of which were accepted by the Committee; but when he attempted to tone down the conditions about the *charkha* and *khaddar*, Mahatmaji got somewhat excited, and abruptly interrupted him with the remark, 'Why?' and it was done in such a loud and thundering tone that Panditji was silenced.

*13th February :*

Today is Monday; Mahatmaji is observing silence. In the morning, he gave me instruction in writing that as a penance for the Chaurichaura disaster he had commenced a five days' fast since the previous evening. For the last two days I had been asking people who generally surrounded him, not to discuss anything about fast or penance, hoping that the question might thereby receive burial. But it was, as events proved, an idle hope. Under his instruction, I sent a message to the Associated Press announcing this fast. He drafted today his famous article for *Young India*, entitled "The Crime of Chaurichaura".

*14th February :*

We were busy making up matter for this week's

*Young India*, the whole of the day. The All-India Congress Committee has been summoned to meet at Delhi on 24th February to consider the Bardoli decision. Mahatmaji's fast would continue till the afternoon of the 17th instant. It would be a trial for him to start for Delhi so soon after breaking the fast. I have had to keep myself away from him most of the time due to pressure of other work, although my heart yearned to nurse him during the fast. I received a little scolding from him today on account of some lapse in *Young India* work. He explained to me his own method of work, and then said, "I realize that it is not possible for you to maintain the same standard always, especially when you have to work under such pressure and amidst such confusion." From today he began to take particular care that there was not much noise or disturbance in my room.

*15th February :*

Today the pressure of the heavy post that arrived in the morning, made me feel somewhat distracted and puzzled. At night Mahatmaji called me to his side, and asked me, "Krishnadas, Has there been any great increase in the amount of your work ? " I at once guessed that it was Jamnalalji who had carried that information to Mahatmaji, for since his coming to Bardoli Jamnalalji had been repeatedly telling me that I had been overworking myself. However, I replied to Mahatmaji by saying that the work had no doubt increased to a certain extent, but it was not yet beyond my capacity to cope with. Then, I explained to him that I was lacking in quickness and alertness. This seemed to have touched Mahatmaji's heart, and with a wealth of affection he said, "Don't worry about that ; speed will come to you by and by." Ba, Shrimati Anasuya-behn, and Shrimati Santanam came from Ahmedabad today on receiving information about Mahatmaji's fast, and so also has come Shri Mathuradas from Bombay. There was, therefore, no lack of people to nurse him ; but my grief was that I was so much occupied with my other duties that I could do nothing but make occasional enquiries about him.

*16th February :*

Till yesterday, although that was the third day, the effect of the fast could not be noticed in him at all ; he had cheerfully spent his time in congenial talks with his friends and followers, and followed the usual daily routine of work without much difficulty or strain. But today he seems to have suddenly broken down. From early morning he spent his time in bed with closed eyes, and seemed to have lost all inclination to, or capacity for, work. At about nine in the morning, he dictated two long letters, and two notes for *Young India*. He then suddenly called for me, and as I came to him, asked me, " Krishnadas, do you think there is any error in reasoning in the ' Crime of Chauri-chaura ' article ? " His voice was full of emotion, and the eyes also seemed to be wet. It appeared to me that the whole of the morning, he had brooded over the question. Although so very weak and exhausted, he sat up on his bed at half past three and continued to write with his own hand a long article for the *Navajivan* till six o'clock in the evening. This additional strain only aggravated his weakness and pain, so much so that it was a most painful sight and we had to spend the hours of the evening helplessly and sorrowfully watching him. Finding him so much fatigued and exhausted, I solicited permission to keep up the whole night and nurse him ; but he was more solicitous about my health than his own comfort, and refused me by saying that he would presently fall to sleep, and that no attendance or watching would be necessary.

*17th February :*

Today is the last day of the fast. The exhaustion and prostration from which he had suffered yesterday was still there, and he lay down in bed the whole of the morning with eyes closed. Then, about noon, he got up and took his bath, which seemed to have refreshed him a little ; for after the bath he could read the day's papers, and dictate a few letters and an article for *Young India*. Although I was otherwise busy the whole day, I was careful that he should break his fast at the appointed time. And so punctually at 5 in the afternoon, I appeared before

him with a small quantity of milk, a few grapes and a cup of orange juice. He then summoned Mathuradas to his side, and asked him to read the twelfth chapter of the *Gita* himself sitting up on his bed with closed eyes and clasped hands, and hearing the recitation with great devotion and attention. A few tear drops escaped his eyes at the time. What is it that Chaurichaura has done, that he, the very embodiment of self-restraint, should today thus lose his balance? Babu Rajendraprasad, Seth Jamnialal Bajaj, Shrimati Anasuyabehn and others came and sat near his presence when he began to partake his repast.\*

The abrupt suspension of civil disobedience caused some disappointment and depression to the people of Bardoli. Mahatmaji, therefore, addressed to them an open letter in Gujarati, an English translation of which is given below :

“ To

The People of Bardoli,

“ You have really done your best ; it was not for your fault that civil disobedience has been suspended, but for the fault of Gorakhpur. We all belong to one single country, which is India ; therefore, the grievous lapse of Gorakhpur has affected us also.

“ For a true soldier, it is all the same whether to fight or not to fight. When the order comes — ‘ March,’ — he goes to fight ; and when the order comes — ‘ Halt ’ — he halts. The Working Committee has now advised us to halt ; therefore, in order to prove that Bardoli is permeated through and through with the spirit of a true soldier, all of you should pay up your taxes as soon as possible.

“ One can suspend civil disobedience, but Satyagraha can never be suspended. Satyagraha should be the breath of our life. Therefore, we should respect the decision of the Working Committee arrived at after a good deal of deliberation for the sake of preserving truth and as a mark of devotion to truth.

“ Although the people of Bardoli were anxious to start civil disobedience, it cannot be denied that they had many deficiencies and shortcomings. I now earnestly hope that they will strive their utmost to remove those shortcomings and increase their fitness for civil disobedience.

“ During my stay here I have learnt that the condition of the *Kaliparaj* (dark-complexioned) community throughout the taluka is no better than that of slaves. It is the duty of the

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\* One Chapter is omitted here. — Ed.

bright-complexioned classes to remove the ignorance of the former and uplift them. This alone will prove that they (the higher classes) really deserve their present higher status or that they are endowed with real brightness. The *charkha* should be spread broadcast among the *Kaliparaj*; and they should be persuaded to send their children to our national schools for their education.

"I strongly desire that the people of Bardoli should achieve their fitness for civil disobedience by fulfilling entirely the conditions laid down by the Congress.

"The *Kaliparaj* are addicted to drink. Our workers should visit their homes and try to wean them from that bad habit by loving and affectionate treatment, and by supplying them with milk, butter-milk or any other cold and soothing drink as a substitute.

"You can establish from today your *panchayats* for the settlement of all your internal quarrels. You can make the best possible arrangement for the training and development of the boys who come to attend your schools. You can achieve your economic freedom by the adoption of the *charkha* in every home and by training a body of weavers and carders in every village. You can run all your *panchayat* courts, your national schools, your anti-drink campaign and propaganda work for the spread of *khaddar* out of the proceeds from the sale of *khaddar*, if you can make the taluka self-contained in regard to its cloth requirements.

"The Congress has pointed out all this activity to you. Every man and woman should be a member of the Congress—this is, in fact, your first duty. Then, you should all contribute to the Swaraj fund a hundredth part of your last year's income. That is the second duty.

"You will have achieved the substance of freedom if you can follow this line of work; and you will also be regarded as having thoroughly qualified yourself for civil disobedience if you can complete this programme of work methodically and in an organized manner.

MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI."

On the 22nd February, Mahatmaji started for Delhi to attend the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee summoned specially to consider the resolution of the Working Committee suspending civil disobedience at Bardoli. Shrimati C. R. Das had pressed Mahatmaji to change the venue of the meeting to Calcutta, but it was not possible to do so especially when an announcement had once been made in favour of Delhi. Mahatmaji, there-

fore, offered himself to go to Calcutta after the All-India Congress Committee meeting, if Shrimati Das desired it. Dr. Mahmud of Bihar, who had been to Calcutta, sent a wire from Patna informing Mahatmaji that the leaders of Bengal were very much displeased with the Bardoli decision, and that they were even contemplating open defiance of that decision. Some flutter was observable among the Maratha leaders also. Shri Zahur Ahmed informed Mahatmaji by a telegram from Bombay that a strong current of agitation was rising against that decision even in Bombay, which was considered to be Mahatmaji's stronghold. Mahatmaji sent the following reply to Shri Zahur Ahmed :

"Thanks wire. Misrepresentation inevitable. But God with us. Let us derive strength from Him rather than from public support. —Gandhi."

Letters began to pour in from all parts of the country criticizing and blaming Mahatmaji for the sudden suspension of the aggressive side of the non-co-operation programme. The volume of that opposition produced some nervousness among his immediate followers and associates ; but he himself remained quite unmoved and unaffected, and, in fact, he ignored those protests altogether. A class of people began to take this opportunity to undermine his influence in the country. Some of them pointed out that Mahatmaji was not, properly speaking, a votary of Swaraj (Indian self-rule), his primary objective being to preach the doctrine of non-violence, even at the cost of India. But the real fact was that from their experience of the West they could not persuade themselves to believe that it was possible to achieve Swaraj by non-violent means as advocated by Mahatmaji. They also failed to realize that a Swaraj established by brute-force, could hardly be expected to safeguard the interest and freedom of the weak, oppressed and down-trodden masses of India. Some of them, again, quoted the sayings of Buddha, and showed that there was sanction for war even in the high and noble teachings of that mighty high priest of *ahimsa*. The fact was that they could not conceive that a war could



be relentlessly waged not by killing the adversary, but by submitting to be killed by him ; that it was possible to engage in a righteous battle without being violent to the enemy but by suffering all sorts of oppression at the latter's hands ; and that the courage demanded by a fight of this character was superior to that possessed by those who engaged in a violent warfare. Buddha's main and central teaching was that anger and hatred was to be conquered by non-anger and non-hatred ; and he gave a secondary sanction to professional warriors, who were bound to obey their masters, to fight without hatred or anger. This did not mean that fighting was advocated or sanctioned by Buddha as a part of the religion which he preached. Some of the advocates of violence also quoted the Hindu scriptures to prove that violence was sanctioned by Hinduism. In their desire to lower Mahatmaji in public estimation, they became very loud in their professions of religion, without, in fact, knowing or understanding what constituted the essence of religion, whether Hindu, Buddhist, or other. Mahatmaji's noble teaching that it was possible to conduct a great non-violent political agitation with no other weapon than spiritual strength, courage, patience, endurance and devotion to Truth, and without any hatred for the adversary, made no appeal to these minds. This furious opposition to the Bardoli decision seemed to make it increasingly clear that there was going to be a serious split in the non-co-operation camp, and that it would be difficult for those who had no conscientious objection to violence as a political weapon to continue remaining under the banner of Mahatma Gandhi for any further length of time.

This time Mahatmaji had to pass through a veritable ordeal of fire at Delhi. It had been apparent for some time that those who had no faith in the policy of non-violence, or were generally speaking opposed to the programme of non-co-operation, would try their best to remove that policy and programme from their place of predominance in Congress politics, and re-establish in their place the old hackneyed method of agitation whose futility had long been exposed

by the political experiences of India as well as of other countries. Immediately after the Bardoli decision, Swami Shraddhanand raised this cry of revolt by saying that it was not possible during a period of political turmoil to keep the peace throughout a vast country like India and create an atmosphere favourable to civil disobedience, as advocated by Mahatmaji, and that therefore the Congress should abandon its policy of non-co-operation, and raise the boycott against the Councils. The non-co-operators, however, were not prepared at that stage to go the whole length with Swami Shraddhananda; but they got very much depressed and demoralized, and blamed Mahatmaji for bringing about a catastrophe in the affairs of the nation by a sudden and hasty change in the programme of work. On his arrival at Delhi, Mahatmaji found that even those whom he regarded as pillars of the movement had ranged themselves against the decision arrived at Bardoli. This convinced him that the ideal upon which the fabric of his conception of Satyagraha was founded had not found proper and adequate recognition in the country. The Bardoli decision had not properly speaking abandoned any vital part of the programme of non-co-operation, nor had it suspended civil disobedience for all time. What it proposed was a halt — a temporary cessation of all kinds of aggressive activities — in order to bring under check the unwholesome excitement that had been dragging the country towards violence. The workers, in fact, had not realized that a disobedience which had its root in excitement, arrogance, anger and retaliation was no *civil* or peaceful disobedience. It was no Satyagraha in fact. Mahatmaji, therefore, found himself in the most difficult and uncomfortable position of being pitted against his dearest co-workers and associates. But he showed that his attachment for the ideal was greater than that for his party, and that he had the strength to stand forth in a minority of one; and, if necessary, even to give battle to his party, for the sake of maintaining the ideal intact.

Leaving Bardoli on 22nd February, Mahatmaji reached Delhi on the 23rd, and, as on the previous occasion,

stayed with Dr. Ansari at Dariyaganj. On his arrival here, he received many letters from his friends and associates, who had been undergoing various terms of imprisonment in the gaols of Delhi, Lucknow, Agra, and other places. All of them, without exception, opposed the Bardoli resolution, and very strongly criticized it. Was it merely for the propagation of the spinning-wheel idea that Mahatmaji had dragged so many well-known leaders of the country and thousands of educated young men to gaol? —asked an indignant correspondent. Another thought that a religious preacher like Mahatmaji should never have come to meddle with politics, and it was the height of folly on the part of the Indian people to accept such a personality as their political leader. There were, again, others who said Mahatmaji had given a decent burial to the non-cooperation movement by one single act of political short-sightedness, destroying a huge mass movement in the twinkling of an eye. They had lost all enthusiasm to work in connection with the movement, and considered that all their sacrifices and efforts had gone in vain. And lastly, an intimate friend and co-worker warned Mahatmaji that he would not at all be surprised or sorry, if the vast body of workers rose in revolt against the Bardoli decision and removed Mahatmaji from his position of leadership. He would take it as natural and justifiable for them, although personally he was prepared to accept as final whatever decision Mahatmaji might ultimately reach in the matter.

At night when it was past ten, the representatives of Bengal came to see Mahatmaji. The excitement, disappointment, and consequent spirit of revolt was said to have been most pronounced among the Bengal delegates. As soon as we reached Dr. Ansari's residence, a Delhi friend jokingly remarked to me that the Bengal people would come and break our heads with their *lathis*. But after discussion with Mahatmaji on the matter, it appeared to me that most of them had calmed down, and the views of some among them had changed completely. The discussion also made it apparent that the leaders of Bengal held that the conditions of *charkha* and *khaddar*, that

Mahatmaji imposed upon the people to qualify for civil disobedience, were unnecessary or superfluous. They repeatedly brought to Mahatmaji's notice that even without waiting for the spread of *charkha* and *khaddar*, only recently they had scored a victory over Government in the matter of the Midnapur Union Board by civil disobedience on a mass scale in the matter of non-payment of a cess. They little realized that this action on their part was opposed to Mahatmaji's strategy that there should be no civil disobedience of an aggressive nature anywhere else in India, when he was engaged in a struggle of that kind at Bardoli. It also did not occur to them that in a war, whether violent or non-violent, the orders of the General in command must be scrupulously obeyed, if a defeat was to be avoided, or if the war was to be brought to a successful conclusion. In the course of this discussion Mahatmaji plainly told the Bengal leaders that he would not yield an inch of ground so far as the fundamental position was concerned, that he was prepared to be thrown into a minority of one, and was confident that he would ultimately conquer public opinion. He further said, "The issue before the country is whether you will have undiluted non-violence, or non-violence diluted with violence." He then referred to the letters received by him from Shri George Joseph and Mahadev Desai from the Agra Jail, and said he would place those letters before the All-India Congress Committee, and ask the members to make their final choice of programme. He did not desire, he said, to make any compromise on the fundamental issue of non-violence.

The representatives of Bengal departed at 12 midnight. Then, came a messenger with a very long letter from a distinguished Indian leader, who was also in gaol at the time, and who was equally with the others disgusted with Mahatmaji on account of the Bardoli decision, and criticized the latter in terms of bitter reproach. Mahatmaji kept reading that letter far into the night, even after we had retired.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

CONGRESS CONSIDERS SUSPENSION OF CIVIL  
DISOBEDIENCE

The principal workers of the Congress assembled at Delhi for the All-India Congress Committee meeting on 24th February (1922) from the different provinces of India. A meeting of the Working Committee was held in the morning to consider the proposals embodied in the Bardoli resolution, and was attended on invitation by representatives of the provinces. The President of the Working Committee, Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb, had in the meantime received an important communication from another leader of all-India repute, who also criticized the Bardoli decision as sounding the death-knell of non-co-operation. The proceedings of the Working Committee meeting referred to above commenced with the reading by Mahatmaji of these several communications received from non-co-operators then in the different gaols of India. Generally speaking these letters found no fault with the suspension of mass civil disobedience, but they were without exception bitterly opposed to the other clauses of the Bardoli resolution. When the reading of the letters was finished, Mahatmaji summarily rejected them with the remark that it was no business of those who were undergoing imprisonment to express their opinion on things happening outside, and that similarly it was no part of the duty of those who were outside to pay any heed to those opinions.

Then, Mahatmaji continued that he had chalked out his programme on the basis of this fundamental idea that in the political condition in which India was situated, it was not possible for her to attain Swaraj except through non-violent means. He could not, therefore, support the view of those who without any conviction about non-violence

had been following the programme of non-co-operation by giving only their vocal assent to the pledge of non-violence, while all the time working for a violent revolution in India under cover of non-violence. If after a full and fair discussion of the subject, the Congress adopted a programme based on the theory of violence, he would welcome it. It would be, indeed, a source of happiness to him if he was defeated at the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee on the definite issue of non-violence *versus* violence. For he would then be able to follow his own non-violent activities with a small band of select and sincere workers, untrammelled by any artificial majority, such as that dogged him at every step. Now, on account of this unmanageable majority, and also his want of confidence in the men he was leading, he had to measure every step, lest he should be led away from the path of non-violence. But when he would get a compact following although small in numbers, he would be able to work without any worry or fear. He said that his experience in South Africa had taught him that he could work better and show greater results when he had only a small, but determined body of men and women under him. If, therefore, the members of the All-India Congress Committee did not want his programme of non-violence, he would gladly and willingly step aside from his present position of leadership. Mahatmaji uttered these words with such deliberation and cool composure, weighing every word as he uttered it, that they produced an immediate effect upon the audience.

Finding him prepared to renounce his leadership, most of the members present got alarmed; and what was more, even Swami Shraddhanand, who, as I have said, was the first to raise the standard of revolt, expressed the opinion that it was not possible at that stage to do any political work in India without the support or guidance of Mahatmaji. A well-known Parsi politician, who had shown violent hostility to the Bardoli decision ever since it had been promulgated, now suddenly altered his attitude, and in a quite submissive tone said, "Mahatmaji, you are

morally bound to lead us. You cannot leave us at this juncture, nor can we afford to spare you." And other leaders and workers also with a united voice admitted the necessity of the continuance of Mahatmaji's leadership, and said that in no case could they allow him to leave them.

Then, Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb wanted to know from the members what effect the Bardoli decision had produced upon the country in general, and what changes in the Bardoli resolution would conciliate the workers. In reply to the query several of the representatives got up one after another to narrate their experiences, the general tenor of which was that the decision had considerably damped the ardour and enthusiasm of the people throughout the country. But they all held that they could not discard Mahatmaji's guidance, so far as mass civil disobedience was concerned, and that they would be satisfied if only the right of defensive civil disobedience and of picketing foreign cloth were restored to them. The suggestion was also put forward by some that the Government might be disobeyed in respect of the Punitive Police Tax, wherever such tax had been imposed upon the people.

This meeting of consultation with provincial representatives held by the Working Committee continued till about 11 a.m. The discussion at this meeting did not appear to have given any relief to Mahatmaji; for it showed that the representatives of the Congress assembled at that meeting clung to him not out of any love for the principles of non-violence or Satyagraha, for which he lived and worked, but only as a mark of personal homage to him, or for fear of losing his leadership, which they valued. Mahatmaji, however, had already guessed the mentality of those who were opposing the Bardoli decision, and what would satisfy the non-co-operators generally under the situation. He had on his way from Bardoli to Delhi, prepared a draft resolution restoring the very rights for which the representatives pressed in the course of their discussion with members of the Working Committee, namely, the right of defensive civil disobedience and

the right of picketing foreign cloth. This draft Mahatmaji placed before a second sitting of the Working Committee held in his room at two in the afternoon, and the Committee having adopted it, it was decided to place this resolution before the All-India Congress Committee as the main resolution on behalf of the Working Committee.

Then, the session of the All-India Congress Committee met at the residence of Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb at 7 in the evening. There were three proposals placed before the Committee for its consideration and decision namely, (1) Dr Moonje's vote of censure on Mahatmaji ; (2) Bardoli resolution without any alteration ; and (3) the Bardoli resolution with changes suggested by the Working Committee after discussion with the provincial representatives. Personally speaking, Mahatmaji was in favour of the acceptance of the second proposition, viz., the Bardoli resolution without any alteration. Nevertheless, he accepted the third proposal out of consideration for feelings of friends, and also because he realized that if he had done otherwise, it would have meant some coercion to public opinion. I describe below the incidents of the occasion from notes which I made at the time.

*24th February :*

The All-India Congress Committee was to have met in Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb's residence at 2 p.m., but it had to be postponed till 7 p.m. because the Working Committee had not finished its deliberations and was not ready with its resolution. The session, however, commenced punctually at 7 p.m. Before the proceedings began, some members raised an objection to the presence of Press reporters at the meeting. Dr Moonje then got up and said in his usual style that they had arrived at a situation involving matters of life and death to the nation. It behoved them to speak out their minds without any reservation, and it was not desirable that any outsider should come to know what transpired at the meeting. The President Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb, wanted to know the sense of the House ; but before the matter was put to the vote, the reporters voluntarily withdrew from the meeting.



From such a rough and combative beginning, one could guess that the proceedings of the night would be sufficiently serious and lively.

Then, Mahatmaji moved the resolution of the Working Committee. He said that there was an impression abroad that he had framed the resolutions of Bardoli under Pandit Malaviya's inspiration, which was absolutely untrue. As soon as he had read about the terrible incident at Chaurichaura, he had realized the grave situation it had created, and had independently, and before he had met Panditji, arrived at the decision, which the resolutions adopted at Bardoli represented. He had not abandoned any part of the original programme of non-co-operation because of the Bardoli resolutions; only there has been some retreat by way of suspension of aggressive activities. In his opinion it was a mere strategic retreat, and had become necessary if only to maintain the non-violent character of the movement. He was prepared to renounce his leadership, if the All-India Congress Committee decided to change the present programme, which was one of non-violence. He requested the House to ponder seriously whether they should continue to follow him as its leader. For if they worked with him he did not know what other and greater occasions of insult and suffering they might not have to face in future. He would warn them that whenever he would discover that the people were in the wrong in any matter, he would not hesitate to proclaim the same publicly. He was, he said, incorrigible in that respect. If they chose to follow his leadership it might be, whenever the circumstances demanded it, they should have to beat a retreat even when they were in sight of the desired goal. In his opinion, the present condition of the country required that the original Bardoli resolution should be adhered to without any alteration, because he felt that at that juncture nothing was more important for the country than the preservation of an atmosphere of peace and non-violence. But although such was his conviction, he did not want to suppress the independence of opinion of the majority of members. He had, therefore,

yielded his ground on one or two points, as was apparent from the resolution he had just moved before the House. But Mahatmaji solemnly warned the members that although the proposed resolution had restored to the Provincial Congress Committees the right of picketing, they must be very cautious in the exercise of that right. He narrated a few instances to explain how picketing was being generally carried out, and said that picketing of that sort was also a form of violence.

Shri V. J. Patel supported the proposal moved by Mahatmaji. He said that the present resolution restored to the Provincial Congress Committees practically all their powers, except that of mass civil disobedience. The strategy of mass civil disobedience with all its attendant dangers, said Shri Patel, was known only to Mahatmaji ; he was the only General who could conduct a campaign of that character ; and, in his opinion, it was unreasonable that any one else should claim the power even for starting mass civil disobedience.

At this point Dr Moonje stood up and said that if the present resolution was passed by the House, it would not be possible for it to consider the motion for censure, which stood in his name. It had been the established practice to take up for consideration, in the first instance, the resolutions framed by the Working Committee. But Mahatmaji realized that Dr Moonje would be placed tactically at a disadvantage if the practice was adhered to on the present occasion. As soon, therefore, as Dr Moonje pointed out the difficulty of his position, Mahatmaji withdrew the resolution of the Working Committee which he had moved, and gave Dr Moonje opportunity to place his proposal before the House.

Dr Moonje's proposal was that a Committee of Enquiry should be appointed to report upon the injuries inflicted upon the country by the policy and programme of non-co-operation as it was being pursued by the Congress. In the opinion of the Doctor, since the inauguration of this programme, the leaders had been playing ducks and drakes with the honour and prestige of the country,

and the Bardoli resolution had brought them to the lowest depth of degradation. He said the country should not tolerate such insults heaped upon it by its own representatives. He, therefore, strongly urged upon the House to take up the question of maintaining its own honour irrespective of any consideration as to the personality of the instrument responsible for lowering its position in the eyes of the world. Swami Satyadeva, Shri Abhyankar, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, and several other well-known representatives lent their support to Dr Moonje's proposal, and raised a chorus of bitter and pungent criticism against Mahatmaji's method of work. They would demand a clear definition of non-violence; they demanded to know the exact line of demarcation between non-violence and violence. They must be clear as to where non-violence ended, and when violence began. The storm continued to blow furiously for some time, when the President Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb, being a little indisposed, left the charge of the meeting to Mahatmaji's hands, and retired.

As soon as he occupied the presidential seat, Mahatmaji seemed to have worked a miracle; for the course of discussion took a different turn almost in the twinkling of an eye. The atmosphere of the meeting had become highly tense and somewhat poisonous due to the violence of the attack, and had gathered volume and force from the opposition to it from some of Mahatmaji's supporters. Mahatmaji, however, from his presidential chair laid down the golden rule that none but the supporters of Dr Moonje's proposition would be heard. And so I noticed that if any of his supporters unable to restrain himself under the lash of criticism of the other side would get up to give a reply, Mahatmaji would signal him to sit down and keep his peace. I was not aware whether in the whole course of its previous career, the All-India Congress Committee had witnessed any such occasion as the present when an overwhelming majority quietly and patiently submitted, without retort, and without opposition, to a regular fusillade of angry and bitter criticism by a minority, which although consisting of important members,

was nevertheless insignificant from the point of view of numbers. It was an object-lesson in tolerance, patience, humility as well as love and respectful consideration for the feelings of the adversary which Mahatmaji gave on this occasion. It was also a practical demonstration as to how a majority should treat with a minority if the internal peace of a country or a community had to be preserved. The result was that a wonderful change of spirit soon came over the whole House. The vehement anger and reproachful bitterness evinced by the critics began to cool down for want of any fuel to keep up the flame. And at last the anti-climax was reached when Dr Moonje got up and explained with a good deal of mildness and persuasive eloquence that he was anxious to hear the arguments on Mahatmaji's side, for if he felt convinced that his proposition was fallacious he would withdraw it. But Mahatmaji refused to defend himself. The proposition was then put to the vote, and was thrown out by an overwhelming majority. After the rejection of Dr Moonje's proposal, Shri J. N. Sengupta of Calcutta brought forward a proposal of his own, which, though identical in character, was somewhat modified in form. During the discussion on this proposal, Mahatmaji adopted the same course of neither defending himself, nor allowing others to defend him. Shri Gupta's proposal was similarly negatived by the Committee with as clear a majority as Dr Moonje's motion.

Thus ended the proceedings of the first sitting of the Committee. Mahatmaji, indeed, gained a victory, so far as the counting of votes was concerned; but he was not satisfied with the result of the meeting. He had noticed that a large number of members had been voting for him without any conviction about the need for non-violence, or about Satyagraha. When the fury of the discussion was raging at the meeting, a well-known member came and whispered in my ears, "We must all vote for Mahatmaji, because we have no other leader who can unite the whole country." This was, indeed, true so far as it went; but according to Mahatmaji himself, such personal homage rendered to him worked more as a hindrance than as a

help towards the recognition of the ideals and programme for which he had been working. He passed the whole night without any sleep, and tossed about in his bed in a state of restless agitation. Finding us somewhat alarmed on his account in the morning, he only heaved a deep sigh, and in a voice choked with emotion exclaimed, "What am I to do? I do not clearly see my way." \*

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### MAHATMAJI'S PLANS

This meeting of the Congress Working Committee unmistakably showed that the differences of opinion and ideal prevailing among those who formed the non-co-operation party would be prominently brought out before the public at no distant date, and that those who were regarded as friends of the movement might in course of time turn into its opponents. It was at Delhi that Mahatmaji realized to the full that people without any deep conviction about the foundations of his whole movement had come to swell the numbers. He found also that a wing of the All-India Congress Committee contained a determined band of politicians, who although opposed to the principle of non-co-operation, had sailed with the current with a view to undermine the movement as soon as an opportunity appeared before them. He, therefore, began to plead in the columns of *Young India* that in the higher interests of the country itself such people should separate themselves and form a party of their own, as opposed to the party of non-co-operation. Thus wrote Mahatmaji :

"Let those who do not believe in non-violence, or believe in both violence and non-violence running together, form a party of their own and fight out the issue. That would make a non-co-operator's task difficult,

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\* Here we omit two chapters describing a meeting of the Congress Working Committee. — Ed.

but not so difficult as when he has to fight an enemy in his own camp. His system must be kept pure. Any impurity from within can ever prove fatal. The first, and indeed the only condition of success, therefore, is that we must be true to ourselves." (*Young India*, February 9, 1922).

Again, "I do say that if Congressmen do not fully believe in the policy (of non-violence) they are doing an injury to the country by pretending to follow it. If violence is to be the basis of the future Government, the Councillors are undoubtedly the wisest. For it is through the Councils that by the same devices by which the present administrators rule us, the Councillors hope to seize power from the former's hand. I have little doubt that those who nurse violence in their bosoms will find no benefit from the lip-profession of non-violence. I urge, therefore, with all the vehemence at my command that those who do not believe in non-violence should secede from the Congress and from non-co-operation, and prepare to seek election or rejoin law-courts or Government colleges, as the case may be. Let there be no manner of doubt that Swaraj established by non-violent means will be different in kind from the Swaraj that can be established by armed rebellion." (*Young India*, March 2, 1922).

And further, "Is it not national economy to let all the ideals be sharply defined, and to work independently of one another? Then that which is most popular will win the day."

And, again, "Is it not right and patriotic for them to form a new party and a new organization? They will then truly educate the country. Those who do not believe in the creed should surely retire from the Congress. Even a national organization must have a creed. One, for instance, who does not believe in Swaraj has no place in the Congress. I submit that even so one who does not believe in 'peaceful and legitimate means' has no place in the Congress. A Congressman may not believe in non-co-operation and still remain in it; but he cannot believe

in violence and untruth, and still be a Congressman." (*Young India*, March 2, 1922).

Finally, Mahatmaji appealed to those members of the All-India Congress Committee who had not given up their legal profession, or had not adopted hand-spun and hand-woven *khaddar* as their wear, to leave the Committee, because they could neither follow nor help forward the programme of non-co-operation, which the Committee as the executive of the Congress was pledged to carry out. Thus, we find him writing,

"A practising lawyer may become a Congressman, but he cannot be called a non-co-operator. He cannot and should not, therefore, be on the All-India Congress Committee. Similarly, one who does not wear hand-spun and hand-woven *khaddar*, or a title-holder, or a Councillor, may not be called non-co-operators though all these may be Congressmen."

While leaving Delhi Mahatmaji planned to stay at the Ashram only for a day or two, and then to go to Bardoli to engage himself in the work of developing that taluka into an ideal centre of rural work on the lines set forth in the new constructive programme. It was also decided that the next sitting of the Working Committee would be held at Lucknow, and there was a talk that he should in that connection take up another tour to various important cities of Northern India to assure the general mass of people that the policy of non-co-operation had not been abandoned by the Bardoli decision, and also to propagate the message of non-violence with greater insistence. While at Delhi Mahatmaji heard from the lips of a representative coming from Assam how the Government had established a veritable reign of terror in that province. The young representative who came to report about the woes of Assam said that he was the only solitary Congressman in the whole Province who had been left out of prison, and that had he not come to Delhi to attend the All-India Congress Committee meeting, he would have perhaps found himself in gaol by that time. He said the Government was taking forcible possession

of the Congress offices, and national volunteers were being brutally assaulted and ill-treated. He appealed to the leaders to come to Assam, as there was not a single man of importance left in the Province to whom the people could look up for lead and guidance. Mahatmaji was considerably moved by this report about the distressing condition of Assam brought about by the reign of lawless repression established by Government and desired that he should pay a flying visit to Gauhati to encourage the workers and assure them of his moral sympathy and support. And in that case he thought he should also attend the Bengal Provincial Conference which was about to hold its session of the year at Chittagong.

When the decision of the All-India Congress Committee at Delhi was widely known throughout the country, it appeared as if the flood of excitement prevailing on all sides received a sudden and abrupt check. It was like a lull after a tremendous and devastating storm. Mahatmaji seemed at the time to be always suffering from deep anguish and mortification. In his private conversations he used to say that God had really saved him by ordaining the Chaurichaura disaster just at the opportune moment ; for had it not occurred he would have begun the civil disobedience at Bardoli, with the result that similar disobedience would have been started on all sides in complete disregard of his instructions and in defiance of the resolutions of the Congress, and the whole country would have been engulfed by anarchy and chaos. His misery at the failure of the people to understand his message, or at their attempt to misuse it by gratifying their spirit of violence and revenge under cover of non-violence knew no bounds. One day when he was thus giving expression to his grief and disappointment, a friend suggested that Mahatmaji might again undertake a tour of the whole country with the special object of preaching the message of non-violence, and of inculcating among the people the spirit of obedience to the instructions of the Congress. But, Mahatmaji said that he did not expect any good from such



tour because the masses would be guided by the national workers, and would do whatever the latter would lead them to do. In his opinion, therefore, unless the conviction and belief of the workers had materially changed, it was not possible to carry on a mass movement, on an India-wide scale along non-violent lines.

Arriving at the Ashram, Mahatmaji turned all his inexhaustible store of energy towards devising ways and means for the organization of efforts in connection with the constructive programme. On the basis of the monetary grant made by the Working Committee at Delhi for propaganda work, he conceived a new plan of work. He had Shri Shuaib Qureshi already by his side, and he now summoned by wire Dr. Hardiker from Hubli, and Shri Sundaram of the Allahabad *Independent* office. A national worker from Sindh, who has been recommended by Dr. Choithram sometime ago, was also directed to join him at once.

With the help of these workers Mahatmaji intended to bring out every week a supplement to *Young India* under the title of *Congress Bulletin* devoted wholly to the furtherance of constructive work. It was to be a record of the progress of work in the different provinces of India on the lines of the new constructive programme, and also a general guide to the people so far as the details of the programme were concerned. One of the workers was to be constantly moving about the country and gather first-hand information about the working of the several items of the programme. Thus, the *Bulletin* was expected to establish a living contact with the different parts of this vast country. Mahatmaji felt that when he was in full possession of facts about the existing situation in the country, he would be able slowly and gradually to harness and direct the energy of the people towards the carrying out of the new programme laid down by him.

Then, he also began to devote his attention to the problem of establishing the national education movement in Gujarat on a sound footing, and of building a permanent habitation for the Gujarat Vidyapith.

Professor Gidwani, with some four or five members of his staff, visited him one of these days, when Mahatmaji described to them the programme upon which he desired to concentrate his energy for the whole year. He said National Education would form the main plank of his activities that year, and then added that a change of a revolutionary character was gradually coming upon him every day, as he thought about the problem of India in the light of his recent experiences. He had not totally given up the idea of civil disobedience; but the conviction was growing upon him from day to day that the success of the new constructive programme would make the adoption of civil disobedience for the realization of India's goal thoroughly unnecessary and superfluous. Or, if civil disobedience was at all to be resorted to, it should be undertaken only after the fulfilment of the constructive programme. Then, he said, the students of colleges and schools should now be directed towards their studies, and should no longer be engaged as national volunteers.

Thus, when Mahatmaji was preparing to throw himself heart and soul into the work of construction, viz., organizing the country for the production and distribution of *khaddar*, for national education, for the removal of untouchability, and for Hindu-Moslem unity, he was suddenly arrested on the 10th of March (1922), and all his work remained incomplete and unfulfilled for the time being.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

## MAHATMAJI'S ARREST

The incidents of his arrest and trial have been described in detail in various publications, and are generally known to all who have taken any interest in the movement of non-co-operation, or in the great author of that movement. I shall not, therefore, repeat those incidents in this book, but shall confine myself to a description of other facts which I had a special opportunity of observing and knowing from my position as his personal assistant during the period.

The Government had made all arrangements for his arrest on the 12th of February, the date on which the civil disobedience campaign at Bardoli would have been launched had there been no violence on the part of the people at Chaurichaura, and we knew that soldiers were picketted at places round about Bardoli as a measure of precaution against contingencies. But eventually the Government seemed to have changed their mind on account of the suspension of civil disobedience at the time. But the newspapers in England published a news dispatch that Mahatmaji's arrest had taken place on 12th February. This showed that the report about the original intention of Government to arrest Mahatmaji on that date, was true. When, however, the English public ultimately came to know that the arrest had been postponed, questions were raised in Parliament, and an agitation was started in the Press in England to force the hands of the Government in the matter.

Subsequently, we learnt at Delhi on 26th February, immediately after the conclusion of the session of the All-India Congress Committee, that the Executive Council of the Viceroy had made their final decision for his arrest

at an early date; and on our return to the Ashram the same rumour reached us from other sources also. A letter was received from Bombay on 6th March intimating that the Government were making arrangements for the arrest. On 7th March, Shri Shankarlal Banker arrived from Bombay with reliable information that we might expect the arrest to take place in the course of the next seven days. Mahatmaji was delighted to hear this from Shri Shankarlal. The same evening he received a telegram from Seth Chhotani urgently pressing him to go to Ajmere, if only for a day, to meet some well-known Muslim divines (ulemas), who had assembled there, and who were anxious to discuss the political situation with him.

On the 8th morning after prayer, Mahatmaji informed the Ashram people that there was a widespread rumour about his impending arrest; and so he instructed them afresh on their duties and responsibilities during his absence in gaol.

Returning to his room from the prayer ground (8th March, morning), the first thing he did was to write an article under the title, "If I am Arrested". He began the article thus :

"The rumour has been revived that my arrest is imminent. It is said to be regarded as a mistake by some officials that I was not arrested when I was to be, i.e., on the 11th or 12th of February, and that the Bardoli decision ought not to have been allowed to affect the Government's programme. It is said, too, that it is now no longer possible for the Government to withstand the ever rising agitation in London for my arrest and deportation. I myself cannot see how the Government can avoid arresting me, if they want a permanent abandonment of civil disobedience, whether individual or mass."

Then, referring to civil disobedience Mahatmaji wrote :

"I advised the Working Committee to suspend mass civil disobedience at Bardoli, because that disobedience would not have been civil, and if I am now advising all provincial workers to suspend even individual civil disobedience, it is because I know that any disobedience at the present stage will be not civil, but criminal. A tranquil atmosphere is an indispensable condition of civil disobedience."

Again,

"I doubt the sincerity of Englishmen who are born fighters, when they declaim against civil disobedience as if it was a diabolical crime to be punished with exemplary severity. If they have glorified armed rebellions and resorted to them on due occasions, why are many of them up in arms against the very idea of civil resistance? I can understand their saying that the attainment of a non-violent atmosphere is a virtual impossibility in India. I do not believe it, but I can appreciate such an objection. What, however, is beyond my comprehension is the dead set made against the very theory of civil disobedience, as if it was something immoral. To expect me to give up the preaching of civil disobedience is to ask me to give up preaching peace, which would be tantamount to asking me to commit suicide."

He concluded the article with the following instructions to his countrymen in the event of his arrest:

"There should, therefore, be no *hartals*, no noisy demonstrations, no processions. I would regard the observance of perfect peace on my arrest as a mark of high honour paid to me by my countrymen. What I would love to see, however, is the constructive work of the Congress going on with clock-work regularity and the speed of the Punjab Express. I would love to see people who have hitherto kept back, voluntarily discarding all their foreign cloth and making a bonfire of it. Let them fulfill the whole of the constructive programme framed at Bardoli, and they will not only release me and other prisoners, but they will also inaugurate Swaraj and secure redress of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs. Let them remember the four pillars of Swaraj: Non-violence, Hindu-Muslim-Sikh-Parsi-Christian-Jew unity, total removal of Untouchability, and manufacture of hand spun and hand-woven *khaddar*, completely displacing foreign cloth."

As soon as this article was finished, he took up writing another. Shortly after, Mahatmaji suddenly called out to me by name, and in raptures exclaimed, "Krishnadas, see what a beautiful article I have written! It is indeed, a piece of beauty; see how I have described the condition of present-day India." Never before did I find Mahatmaji going into raptures over any of his own writings. The caption of the article is "Death Dance", and it gives a pen picture of the exploitation of India by an Imperialist Government, and all those who being attached to the "central corporation", derive their sustenance from, and thrive at the cost of, the poor, toiling masses of the land.

It is a "giddy dance of death from which no one cares to free himself" — cried out Mahatmaji in agony. The ringing words and rhythm of the article makes it almost like a piece of prose-poem. I quote only a few sentences by way of illustration :

"The Councillors want their fares and extras, the ministers their salaries, the lawyers their fees, the suitors their decrees, the parents such education for their boys as would give them status in the present life, the millionaires want facilities for multiplying their millions, and the rest their unmanly peace. The whole revolves beautifully round the central corporation. It is a giddy dance from which no one cares to free himself, and so, as the speed increases, the exhilaration is the greater. But it is a death dance, and the exhilaration is induced by the rapid heartbeat of a patient who is about to expire."

On the 8th, Mahatmaji sent the following wire to Shri Prakasam on receipt of information about the arrest of Deshabhakta Konda Venkatappayya :

"Glad to learn Venkatappayya's arrest. Hope there will be no *hartal*, no demonstration, no civil disobedience, not even mental anguish, but a grim determination to pursue the constructive programme. Most effective demonstration would be for every Andhra who loves Venkatappayya to discard all foreign cloth, take to spinning and remove untouchability. Attending your requirements — Gandhi."

Then, Mahatmaji left for Ajmere by train in the afternoon (8th March), accompanied by Shri Shuaib Qureshi, and Shri Parasram of Kanpur.

On the 9th March (1922), the rumour about his imminent arrest began to reach us with added force and insistence. At Bombay, the people were under the impression on that day that the arrest had already taken place ; and telegrams were received from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, from such widely distant places as Allahabad and Wardha, asking for the verification of the widespread rumour. In the evening we learnt that a Government Code telegram containing 150 words had been received at the Central Telegraph Office at Ahmedabad, but had been redirected to Ajmere, where, as already

stated, Mahatmaji had gone by invitation from Seth Chhotani to meet the *ulemas* assembled at the place.

On the 10th March, we went to the Sabarmati station in expectation of Mahatmaji's return from Ajmere by the train reaching Sabarmati at 2 p.m.. The rumour about the arrest had in the meantime spread like wildfire, and quite a number of people from Ahmedabad and neighbouring places had arrived at Sabarmati, and been anxiously waiting for his return. As the train stopped at the Sabarmati station he got down from it with a face radiant with smiles, and was about to leave the precincts of the station escorted by a large crowd of people. At that moment a British soldier, who had been watching Mahatmaji from the train with wide and curious eyes, stretched out his hand as Mahatmaji was about to pass him, and said, "Mr Gandhi, I must shake hands with you." Mahatmaji also stretched his hand which was immediately grasped by the soldier, who in the fullness of his heart stammered out some feeling words which, however, we could not catch. The reverence and affection shown to Mahatmaji by this ordinary British soldier touched the tenderest chords of all assembled there. Although Mahatmaji wanted to come away it was after some time that the soldier released his grasp and allowed him to part.

Mahatmaji left the station in a car, and I followed him on foot. While passing the gate of the Sabarmati gaol, a policeman came to me in great haste, and enquired in anxious tones, "Has Bapuji come?" The incident revealed to me that even Government 'sepoys' attached to the gaol at Sabarmati addressed Mahatmaji as Bapuji. The 'sepoys' was also going to tell me something else, but seemed to have changed his mind on second thought.

Arriving at the Ashram at half past three, Mahatmaji rested for a while, and then began his usual routine of work. He sent the following wire to Seth Jamnalal Bajaj: "Thick rumour arrest; you Ramdas should come if not required there — Gandhi." He also informed the Congress office at Bombay about his probable movements by the

following cryptic message — 'Weather permitting going Bardolji Sunday — Gandhi.'

Then gradually the evening prayer-time arrived, when Mahatmaji went and joined the prayer. He was in an exceptionally happy mood. After the prayer he repaired to his room and dictated letters to Shri Jayakar of Bombay, Shri Kelkar of Poona, Shri Gopala Menon of Malabar, Shri Bhagavandas of Banaras, and M. Paul Richard, the French writer. These letters had to be posted the next day without his signature inasmuch as the arrest took place a little while after he had finished dictating them. I have thought fit to reproduce two only of these letters as they deal specially with some of the most vital problems of the Indian national movement, namely, the efficacy of non-violence as a political weapon, and the question of maintaining unity between Hindus and Muslims.

Satyagrahashram,  
Sabarmati,  
10th March, 1922.

Dear Mr Jayakar,

I do wish you get well and strong.

I thank you for your long letter, but I won't weary you with my counter-argument. As you know my arrest is reported to be imminent, but if I am not arrested I shall look forward to our meeting. Just one thing I would like to say in order to correct what seems to me to be a misapprehension. I should be sorry if anything I have written has led you to infer that I have, in any shape or form altered my view about the efficacy of imprisonment for our salvation.

I have not lost faith in the responsiveness to sacrifice by those who compose the Government. Only those who have courted imprisonment have not all been of the right sort. I certainly expect no response whatsoever to the imprisonment of those who are full of violence in their hearts, and my reason for suspending even civil disobedience for the time being is to see if it is at all possible to produce an atmosphere of real non-violence. Thus my present view is not due to my discovery of greater hardness in the administrators, but to the painful discovery of much less non-violence now in our midst than I had expected.

Syt. M. R. Jayakar,  
399, Thakurdwar,  
Bombay.

Yours sincerely,



Satyagrahashram,  
Sabarmati,  
10th March, 1922

My dear Gopala Menon,

I certainly do remember your conviction.

I wish your venture all success. The only message that I can send in the midst of overwhelming work is for both Hindus and Moplahs to realize their future responsibility not to brood over the past. How to reach the Moplahs as also the class of Hindus whom you would want to reach through your newspaper is more than I can say, but I know that Hindus should cease to be cowardly. The Moplahs should cease to be cruel. In other words, each party should become truly religious. According to the *Shastras*, Hinduism is certainly not the creed of cowards. Equally certainly, Islam is not the creed of the cruel. The only way the terrible problem before you can be solved is by a few picked Hindus and Mussalmans working away in perfect unison and with faith in their mission. They ought not to be baffled by absence of results in the initial stages, and if you can get together from among your readers a number of such men and women your paper will have served a noble purpose.

Yours sincerely,

Syt. N. Gopala Menon,  
Editor, *Naveena Keralam*,  
6, Vellala Street, Vepery,  
Madras.

The arrest took place at half past ten in the evening. The leave-taking from the Ashram, the desire he expressed before his surrender to hear his favourite hymn, "He is the true Vaishnava," etc.,\* which was done in chorus by the Ashramites assembled; his meeting with Maulana Hasrat Mohani on the way; the utter joyfulness with which he greeted the arrest, — all these have been amply done justice to by many a previous writer. There was no show of force on the part of the Government. In fact, the Superintendent of Police was so courteous that he would not enter the Ashram but waited for Mahatmaji on the public road in his car, allowing Mahatmaji as much time as he desired to prepare himself for the surrender. While going to surrender himself, Mahatmaji began to mutter repeatedly in a delightful mood — "Oh! the happy day;

---

\* This hymn with an English rendering will be found on p. 79 of this book.

Sunday

12.3.22

My dear Kristodas.

The correspondence,  
reports &c should come to  
you for disposal

Unless it is too much  
for you the papers  
all articles must finally  
pass through your hands

I have several names  
as Editor Ardas Sahi  
Babu, Rajgopalachari,  
you, Swaiti Kaka, Udaya

It would be better now  
if Babu gave you  
the permission to sign  
articles.

The room should be  
entirely at your disposal.  
You should lock the  
veranda door from  
inside. Fix up the  
whole office there. Hardiker  
& the bulletin staff  
should be there for  
work but under your  
permission

Of course you have  
my blessings. God will  
give you give you all  
the strength & wisdom  
you need

Baton

the best thing has happened ; the best thing indeed has happened."

Shrimati Gandhi, Anasuyabehn, Syt. Chhaganlal Gandhi, Shri Shuaib and myself were permitted to accompany him to the gaol, and I was privileged to prepare the bed for him on the first night. Before finally leaving him there, I prostrated myself at his feet. Moved by affection, he gave me a vigorous slap on my back. It was about 12 midnight when we returned to the Ashram. I could not close my eyes the whole of that night, and all the strength of my body and mind seemed to have evaporated. The last preceding seven months, which I had spent in Mahatmaji's company almost without a break, now appeared to my bewildered mind to have been a sort of a trance from which I had just recovered. In this state of separation I felt that I was like a rudderless ship cast adrift on the stormy sea of life.

He was lodged in the Sabarmati gaol from the 10th to the 20th March (1922), during which time he was taken out twice. Firstly, when he was produced before the prosecuting Magistrate on the 11th, and again for the final trial before the Sessions Court on the 18th March (1922). So long as he was in the Sabarmati gaol we had every facility to visit him as often as we desired, but I had not the heart to go there. On the 12th March (Sunday), I received a note from him in English which is printed here in facsimile.

On the 16th, I myself wrote to him for direction about other matters, and also referred to the state of my mind owing to separation from him. Fortunately, however, it fell to me that very day to carry to him his midday meal — the gaol authorities having been kind enough to give us permission to take for him his meals from the Ashram. When I was about to leave, he called me to his side, and first of all took me to task for my giving way to grief. He then began to make various kind enquiries about my needs and wants. Referring to *Young India*, he said, \*

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\* Mahatmaji's custom was to speak in Hindi. I give the translation.

"Have no worry over *Young India*. Don't be harassed by the thought that all the columns have to be filled at any cost, or that you must seek to make it attractive by appropriate and topical leading articles. If you can't fill up the sixteen columns, publish as much as you can; if no leading article be ready, let the issue go without it. You will do what you can without any strain on your nerves." Then, he said, he had decided to appoint Shri Shuaib Qureshi as editor of *Young India*, and asked me to give him as much help and co-operation as I could. Referring to Shri Shuaib, he said, "Shuaib is a jewel of a man. The more you will get near him, the more you will appreciate his worth and the noble qualities of his head and heart."

He continued in this strain for some time more, and applied the healing balm to the wound in my heart. When I was somewhat comforted I enquired of him as to what I should do if the Government stopped the publication of *Young India*. Mahatmaji replied, "You will simply bury yourself in my room, and begin to live like a true *yogi*. That room is yours. Don't leave the Ashram till I return. If the Government forces us to stop all other activities, then (pointing to a *charkha* — lying at some distance), that is our work. I tell you it is my faith that all our duties, secular and spiritual, are embodied there. If you would closely scrutinize my activities you will find that the *charkha* is my only contribution to the world. Therefore, the wide acceptance of my message to India will be truly indicated only by the spread of the *charkha*. I am not the originator of the idea of civil disobedience, although it is true that I have developed that idea, and have discovered a more extensive field for its application. Besides working the *charkha* you may also arrange to run a hand-written issue of *Young India*. In that case, don't make the size of the paper more than one sheet of foolscap paper. You must learn how to compress news and ideas within that short space," etc.

For the ten days that Mahatmaji was confined in the Sabarmati prison (10th March 10-30 p.m. — 20th March

12 midnight), the gaol was transformed into a sort of a royal Darbar. A regular stream of people used to come and crowd at the gaol-gate seeking for an opportunity to see Mahatmaji with the permission of the gaol-authorities. I again went to the gaol on the morning of the 18th, the date fixed for the Sessions Court trial, for a "darshan" not to be repeated perhaps for many a month, or perhaps, as I thought, for many a year. He was then surrounded by many well-known and renowned leaders of India, who were asking him questions as to the future programme of work for the country. After some time spent in this way, Mahatmaji rose to have his bath. Pandit Malaviyaji, who was there at the time, desired me to go and help Mahatmaji. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj and I accordingly went to the bathing-place, and we felt as if we were anointing the Master before his crucifixion. Mr. Healy, the Superintendent of Police, arrived about this time to escort Mahatmaji to the Sessions Court. We hastened to come out of the gaol and proceeded to the Government Circuit House, situated on the other bank of the river Sabarmati, where the authorities had decided to hold the trial, admission to which was regulated by passes like the one given below:

**Sessions Case No. 45 of 1922.**

Imperator Vs { (1) Mr. M. K. Ghandhi.  
(2) Mr. S. G. Banker.

Date of hearing **Saturday 18th March 1922**

**Government circuit house, Shahibag.**



**ADMISSION PASS.**

*R. K. Thakkar*

Registrar,

Sessions Court,

AHMEDABAD.

The sights and incidents connected with this memorable trial have been described in detail by different writers, and it is not necessary for me to tread the same ground here. The pleasant smile that played on Mahatmaji's lips when the Judge pronounced a sentence of imprisonment for six long years; his cheerfulness, good humour, and self-control, and above all, his abounding courtesy to the Judge, who equally reciprocated the courtesy — charmed and captivated the hearts of those who witnessed the trial. Nevertheless, a loud wail rose from the assembled people when the Judge pronounced his sentence. I cannot describe the heart-rending scene when he was torn away from his near and dear ones, and all those who had followed him and remained in intimate touch with him during the vicissitudes of his career in the field of Indian politics. Some who had been most intimate with him simply ran away from the scene lest they should break down under the swelling emotions that were agitating them. Amidst all that tumult and confusion, I stood at a corner as one dazed, and forgot to approach him and take my final leave. A friend, who found me in that plight, caught me by both his hands, and dragged me into Mahatmaji's presence. I bowed my head to him in reverence when he affectionately caught me by the tuft of my hair and repeated his desire that I should not leave the Ashram until he returned.

He was lodged in the Sabarmati gaol for the two days following on the order of imprisonment; then, all on a sudden, with no previous information or warning, he was removed from Sabarmati at dead of night on the 20th March. For two days after the removal we had no information about his whereabouts, and Ba passed those days almost in a state of living death. However, after two days of intense suspense and anxiety we learnt through non-official sources that both Mahatmaji and Shri Shankarlal Banker had been transferred to and lodged at the gaol at Yeravda near Poona.

## APPENDIX

### MAHATMA GANDHI'S STATEMENT BEFORE THE COURT

[Before reading his written statement, Gandhiji spoke a few words as introductory remarks to the whole statement. He said:]

"Before I read this statement I would like to state that I entirely endorse the learned Advocate General's remarks in connection with my humble self. I think that he was entirely fair to me in all the statements that he has made, because it is very true and I have no desire whatsoever to conceal from this Court the fact that to preach disaffection towards the existing system of Government has become almost a passion with me, and the learned Advocate General is also entirely in the right when he says that my preaching of disaffection did not commence with my connection with *Young India*, but that it commenced much earlier and in the statement that I am about to read, it will be my painful duty to admit before this Court that it commenced much earlier than the period stated by the Advocate General. It is the most painful duty with me but I have to discharge that duty knowing the responsibility that rests upon my shoulders, and I wish to endorse all the blame that the learned Advocate General has thrown on my shoulders in connection with the Bombay occurrences, Madras occurrences and the Chaurichaura occurrences. Thinking over these deeply and sleeping over them night after night, it is impossible for me to dissociate myself from the diabolical crimes of Chaurichaura or the mad outrages of Bombay. He is quite right when he says, that as a man of responsibility, a man having received a fair share of education, having had a fair share of experience of this world, I should have known the consequences of every one of my acts. I knew that I was playing with fire. I ran the risk and if I was set free I would still do the same. I have felt it this morning that I would have failed in my duty, if I did not say what I said here just now.

I wanted to avoid violence. I want to avoid violence. Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed. But I had to make my choice. I had either to submit to a system which, I considered, had done an irreparable harm to my country, or incur the risk of the mad fury of my people bursting forth, when they understand the truth from my lips. I know that my people have sometimes gone mad. I am deeply sorry for it and I am therefore here to submit not to a light penalty but to the highest penalty. I do not ask for mercy. I do not plead any extenuating act. I am here, therefore, to invite and cheerfully



submit to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me, for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the Judge, is as I am just going to say in my statement either to resign your post, or inflict on me the severest penalty, if you believe that the system and law you are assisting to administer are good for the people. I do not expect that kind of conversion, but by the time I have finished with my statement you will perhaps have a glimpse of what is raging within my breast to run this maddest risk which a sane man can run."

[The statement was then read out.]

#### STATEMENT

"I owe it perhaps to the Indian public and to the public in England, to placate which this prosecution is mainly taken up, that I should explain why from a staunch loyalist and co-operator I have become an uncompromising disaffectionist and non-co-operator. To the Court too I should say why I plead guilty to the charge of promoting disaffection towards the Government established by law in India.

My public life began in 1893 in South Africa in troubled weather. My first contact with British authority in that country was not of a happy character. I discovered that as a man and an Indian I had no rights. More correctly I discovered that I had no rights as a man because I was an Indian.

But I was not baffled. I thought that this treatment of Indians was an excrescence upon a system that was intrinsically and mainly good. I gave the Government my voluntary and hearty co-operation, criticizing it freely where I felt it was faulty, but never wishing its destruction.

Consequently when the existence of the Empire was threatened in 1899 by the Boer challenge, I offered my services to it, raised a volunteer ambulance corps and served at several actions that took place for the relief of Ladysmith. Similarly in 1906 at the time of the Zulu revolt I raised a stretcher-bearer party and served till the end of the 'rebellion'. On both these occasions I received medals and was even mentioned in despatches. For my work in South Africa I was given by Lord Hardinge a Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal. When the war broke out in 1914 between England and Germany I raised a volunteer ambulance corps in London consisting of the then resident Indians in London, chiefly students. Its work was acknowledged by the authorities to be valuable. Lastly in India when a special appeal was made at the War Conference in Delhi in 1918 by Lord Chelmsford for recruits, I struggled at the cost of my health to raise a corps in Kheda and the response was being made when the hostilities ceased and orders were received that no more recruits were wanted. In all these efforts at service I was actuated by the belief that it was

possible by such services to gain a status of full equality in the Empire for my countrymen.

The first shock came in the shape of the Rowlatt Act, a law designed to rob the people of all real freedom. I felt called upon to lead an intensive agitation against it. Then followed the Punjab horrors beginning with the massacre at Jalianwala Bagh and culminating in crawling orders, public floggings and other indescribable humiliations. I discovered too that the plighted word of the Prime Minister to the Mussalmans of India regarding the integrity of Turkey and the holy places of Islam was not likely to be fulfilled. But in spite of the forebodings and the grave warnings of friends, at the Amritsar Congress in 1919 I fought for co-operation and working the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, hoping that the Prime Minister would redeem his promise to the Indian Mussalmans, that the Punjab wound would be healed and that the reforms inadequate and unsatisfactory though they were, marked a new era of hope in the life of India.

But all that hope was shattered. The Khilafat promise was not to be redeemed. The Punjab crime was white-washed and most culprits went not only unpunished but remained in service and some continued to draw pensions from the Indian revenue, and in some cases were even rewarded. I saw too that not only did the reforms not mark a change of heart, but they were only a method of further draining India of her wealth and of prolonging her servitude.

I came reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than she was before, politically and economically. A disarmed India, has no power of resistance against any aggressor if she wanted to engage in an armed conflict with him. So much is this the case that some of our best men consider that India must take generations before she can achieve the Dominion status. She has become so poor that she has little power of resisting famines. Before the British advent India spun and wove in her millions of cottages just the supplement she needed for adding to her meagre agricultural resources. This cottage industry, so vital for India's existence, has been ruined by incredibly heartless and inhuman processes as described by English witnesses. Little do town dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realize that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt what-

soever that both England and the town-dwellers of India have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history. The law itself in this country has been used to serve the foreign exploiter. My unbiassed examination of the Punjab Martial Law cases has led me to believe that at least ninety-five per cent of convictions were wholly bad. My experience of political cases in India leads me to the conclusion that in nine out of every ten the condemned men were totally innocent. Their crime consisted in the love of their country. In ninety-nine cases out of hundred justice has been denied to Indians as against Europeans in the Courts of India. This is not an exaggerated picture. It is the experience of almost every Indian who has had anything to do with such cases. In my opinion the administration of the law is thus prostituted consciously or unconsciously for the benefit of the exploiter.

The greatest misfortune is that Englishmen and their Indian associates in the administration of the country do not know that they are engaged in the crime I have attempted to describe. I am satisfied that many Englishmen and Indian officials honestly believe that they are administering one of the best systems devised in the world and that India is making steady though slow progress. They do not know that a subtle but effective system of terrorism and an organized display of force on the one hand, and the deprivation of retaliation or self-defence on the other, have emasculated the people and induced in them the habit of simulation. This awful habit has added to the ignorance and the self-deception of the administrators. Section 124A under which I am happily charged is perhaps the prince among the political sections of the Indian Penal Code designed to suppress the liberty of the citizens. Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by law. If one has no affection for a person or system one should be free to give the fullest expression to his disaffection, so long as he does not contemplate, promote, or incite to, violence. But the section under which Shri Banker and I are charged is one under which mere promotion of disaffection is a crime. I have studied some of the cases tried under it, and I know that some of the most loved of India's patriots have been convicted under it. I consider it a privilege, therefore, to be charged under that section. I have endeavoured to give in their briefest outline the reasons for my disaffection. I have no personal ill-will against any single administrator, much less can I have any disaffection towards the King's person. But I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a Government which in its totality has done more harm to India than any previous system. India is less manly under the British rule than she ever was before. Holding such a belief, I consider it to be a sin to have affection for the system. And it has been a precious privilege for me to be able to write what I have in the various articles tendered in evidence against me.

In fact, I believe that I have rendered a service to India and England by showing in non-co-operation the way out of the unnautral state in which both are living. In my humble opinion, non-co-operation with evil is as much a duty as is co-operation with good. But in the past, non-co-operation has been deliberately expressed in violence to the evil-doer. I am endeavouring to show to my countrymen that violent non-co-operation only multiplies evil, and that as evil can only be sustained by violence, withdrawal of support of evil requires complete abstention from violence. Non-violence implies voluntary submission to the penalty for non-co-operation with evil. I am here, therefore, to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime, and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the Judge, is either to resign your post and thus dissociate yourself from evil, if you feel that the law you are called upon to administer is an evil, and that in reality I am innocent; or to inflict on me the severest penalty if you believe that the system and the law you are assisting to administer are good for the people of this country and that my activity is therefore injurious to the public weal."

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